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ABSTRACT

FEMALE LEADERSHIP NARRATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN QATAR IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

by

Tasneem Amatullah

The booming economic development and access to modern education are the key drivers that have recently changed the position of women in Qatari society. Research shows that increased motivation among women to pursue a career and enhance their skills and capabilities is helping the economy of all GCC nations. Despite the upcoming drastic increase in women's participation in the workforce, women still hold few leadership positions in the GCC. This study examines the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar in the field of higher education to further explore the ways they maneuver their leadership roles in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice. Specifically, the intent was to understand the unique leadership narratives of three Qatari female leaders in higher education. To illuminate female leaders' experiences in Qatar this study employs interpretivist narrative research methods. Interviews and meetings' observations helped construct detailed stories of leaders' lived experiences. While findings partially reiterated existing literature, this study shed light on several unique contributions to Muslim female leadership and embedding Islamic leadership in leadership roles resulting in implications for practice and research.

FEMALE LEADERSHIP NARRATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN QATAR IN
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Expanded Form |
|---------------------|---|
| AAUW | American Association of University Women |
| ASHE | Association for the Study of Higher Education |
| EFNE | Education for a New Era |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| G20 | Group of Twenty |
| IRB | Institutional Review Board |
| KSA | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| MDPS | Ministry of Development, Planning & Statistics |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PBUH | Peace be Upon Him |
| QNV | Qatar National Vision |
| SEC | Supreme Education Council |
| SWT | Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala (May He be glorified and exalted) |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organization |

DEDICATION



In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful.

Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.

(Al- Quran, 33:35)

To my husband, my strongest motivation.
To my parents and in-laws, for their endless prayers.
To my children, for their selfless sacrifices.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Much has been written about recent transformation and leadership initiatives in the Middle East and the Gulf countries. A particular focus has been on the recommended policy reforms of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions in economic, social, and cultural spheres. Countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, are particularly unique in the Middle East in that they have progressed significantly over the past two decades. Particularly, there is a 33 percent increase in female participation in the workforce since 1993 to 2013, and a 19 percent increase specifically in Qatar (Willen, Lohmeyer, Perniceni, & Neiva, 2016).

Of the GCC countries, Qatar is transforming at a rapid pace. Qatar is in the midst of a massive educational reform with a national vision that aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for its entire people for generations to come (Qatar National Vision, 2008). Qatar's leaders recognize that education is a key to economic, social, and political progress. Qatar is an Islamic nation and Sharia, the Islamic law, is the legislative body. Yet, Qatar is unique in that its way of practicing Islam is progressive as compared to that of its neighboring countries. For example, although the education system in Qatar incorporates Islamic teachings as a priority in their education system, there is an emphasis on contemporary professional preparation and critical thinking.

Qatar's leadership emphasizes "comprehensive development" as their "main goal in striving for the progress and prosperity of our people" (Qatar National Vision, 2008). In 2008, the Qatar national vision (QNV) 2030 was exposed to the public. This vision depends on four developments that are interrelated and affect each other. Asghal, Qatar's public works authority website, highlights these four developments:

- Environmental development: To manage the environment in a way that guarantees co-ordination and harmony between social and economic development and protects the environment from unnecessary harm.
- Economic development: This aims to build a diverse, competitive economy that will provide prosperity for all, in the present and future.

- Social development: The country seeks to build a safe and fair community, founded on good morals, and able to play a role in making the world – not just Qatar – a better place for all.
- Human development: Where we seek to develop Qatar and its constituent individuals into a prosperous and flexible society, at ease with the changing world around it. (Ashghal, 2015)

Qatar's leadership believes that human development is the primary contributor to the realization of this vision and development of the nation. Moreover, the overarching belief is that in order to meet the requirements of these developments, education is a key factor. *The Gulf-Times*, Qatar's national news press describes the advancement of Qatar from its earliest educational systems (kuttab): "from kuttab to the Qatar National Vision, education in Qatar has been transformed in decades" (The Gulf-times, 2012).

Further, the QNV 2030 defines the characteristics of Qatar's future and expresses the challenges and opportunities that they need to keep in mind. It stresses the need to balance five challenges: preserve Qatar's values and traditions, while keeping in par with the modernization; fulfill the needs of the current generation and the coming generation; manage growth and expansion; monitor the quality of the expatriate labor force for specific field of development; and economic growth, social development and environmental management (Qatar National Vision, 2008).

The involvement of women in the labor market plays a pivotal role for the economic growth of Qatar. Studies show that an additional 100 million women will be added to the G20¹ labor force by 2025, and that this development will escalate the MENA Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economy by 12 percent by the year 2030. A. T. Kearney's recent study on gender equality evaluated the "Power Women" in Arabia. This report highlights the extensive progress made by the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries about gender equality at workplace. The booming economic development and access to modern

¹ [G20](#), which stands for Group of Twenty, is an assembly of governments and leaders from 20 of the world's largest economies: 19 countries – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States – and the European Union

education are the key drivers that change the position of women in Qatari society. Research shows that increased motivation among women to pursue a career and enhance their skills and capabilities is helping the economy of all GCC nations. While the economic participation of women in GCC countries is relatively low compared to some western nations, across GCC nations, women are most active in the education field. While in Qatar, only 51% of women over the age of 15 are economically active, 88% of those women work in education-related fields.

Yet, despite the upcoming drastic increase in women's participation in the workforce, women still hold few leadership positions in the GCC (Willen, Lohmeyer, Perniceni, & Neiva, 2016). And, for all that women are involved in the economic sector of Qatar, they still comprise only 12% of the total labor force² (Ministry of Development & Statistics (MDPS), 2015). In order to improve women's participation in all economic spheres, Qatar needs collaborative effort from all stakeholders from businesses, policy makers, academic institutions and the community itself to bridge the gender inequality gap (Willen et. al, 2016). Central to those efforts is the role of women in leadership, and particularly in educational leadership. Hence, this study examines the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar in the field of higher education to further explore the ways they maneuver their leadership roles in light of Islamic leadership theory and practice.

Personal rationale for the study

As a resident of Qatar for the past six years, I witnessed several influential Qatari women leading numerous organizations. Women play a prominent role in Qatar, leading the Qatar Foundation, Qatar University, the Ministry of Education, Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technologies, the National Health Authority, entrepreneurs and much more. Women role models for gender equality, such as the visionary Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Al-Misnad, who is also the founder of Education City (a hub of Western higher education universities), and the appearance of top professional Qatari females in the media have further inspired women to liberate their role in society through education. Furthermore, my personal and professional experiences echo women's contribution in leadership positions in all societies. For instance, my experience in the education sector, both in K-12 and higher education settings

² Number of persons at working age (15 years and above) who are either working or not working but looking for work and unemployed people in Qatar

fueled my interest to study female leaders' narratives. I recall a snippet from my two years of experience as a graduate assistant. I worked closely with the dean of the College of Education at Qatar University, who was a female leader. I got into several conversations with her that inspired me a lot. One of the most memorable discussions with this leader was during my Master of Education final research project that studied the higher education challenges of female Qatari leaders. I engaged in several conversations with three Qatari female leaders who shared their stories and ways they maneuvered to these leadership positions. As I was exploring research about their experiences while pursuing higher education, I heard these participants say that the Qatari government was one of the biggest supports that helped them advance in their education and careers. Interestingly, they all argued that Islam empowers women and there are stereotypes associated with Muslim women that portrays them as oppressed.

I continued to study research on the leadership experiences in K-12 education system in Qatar (Al-Fadala, 2015; Romanowski et. al., 2013; Romanowski & Amatullah, 2014; Ellili-Cherif et.al, 2011; Romanowski, 2015), and found a dearth of information about higher education leadership experiences. This led me to want to explore female leadership experiences in higher education settings in Qatar especially in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice in educational settings.

The Study

This study explores female leadership experiences in higher education settings in Qatar. Specifically, this research focuses on the women's narratives about their leadership approaches with regards to Islamic leadership theory and practices. The central question guiding this study is as follows: How do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education? This research focuses on female leaders' experiences in higher education in an Islamic context to address four gaps in the literature: 1) that of *leader* narratives on leadership; 2) that of *female* leader narratives on leadership; 3) that of female leader narratives in *higher education*, and 4) that of female leaders *themselves* narrating about their experiences as a leader in *Qatari Islamic context* and the *educational reform*. As predicted, the narratives of these women leaders offered interesting insights into their leadership experiences as well as highlighted the challenges associated to their leadership roles.

Dissertation Roadmap

This study examines the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar in higher education in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice. In this chapter, I set the context for the present study's research question and personal rationale for the study. I provide a brief overview of Qatar's national vision and development efforts in four main areas: environmental, social, economic, and human development. I then highlight the need for women's participation in the workforce from A. T. Kearney's "Power Women" in Arabia study (2016) advocating for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders from businesses, policy makers, academic institutions and the community to help bridge the gender inequality gap. The remaining eight chapters of this dissertation comprise of the literature review, methodology, the researcher's challenges, results- one chapter for each of my leader's narratives, cross-case analysis and discussion, and the conclusion and implications of the present study.

Chapter two consists of literature review providing a detailed background of the research site, Qatar. I present a description of the educational reforms in Qatar and the efforts to make Qatar a knowledge-based economy. Then, I detail the Islamic beliefs and practices, significance of education and leadership in Islam, and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH³). I then present evolution of leadership theories and practice followed by Islamic education leadership literature and framework. Finally, I conclude my literature review, detailing women in educational leadership and the role of women and leadership in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries.

Chapter three details the methodology of my study including the philosophical assumptions underlying my research methodology. I elaborate on narrative inquiry methods and present research and my understanding of narrative inquiry from both ontological and epistemological lens. Next, I explain how narrative inquiry is deployed in my study including how I recruited my participants and collected, analyzed and interpreted the data. In this chapter, I also address ethical considerations, issues of voice, power, and trustworthiness, and address the credibility aspect of my research. Furthermore, I reflect on the strengths and limitations of this research design in my methodology chapter. In the last part of this chapter, I also present my reflection as I juggle through my positionality as a researcher and share variety of challenges I faced and overcame in different phases of my research. I present several narratives within the

³ Peace be upon him

overarching narrative of a researcher maneuvering ways through participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapters four through six details each leaders' narratives. These narratives are organized according to the interview questions they were asked (See Appendix-A). Each of this section is titled with a quote from their leadership narratives that is representative of their response to that particular question. For instance, for the question on "how you define leadership," A'isha's response was "It's more about *us* rather than *me* as a leader." Hence, this served as a subtitle in A'isha's leadership story in her own words.

The next chapter draws connections between each narrative, other leader's narratives, and their non-participant observations. This section details a cross-case analysis utilizing Padela's Islamic leadership framework (2015). I first found overlapping themes and then examined them in the light of this framework. The cross-case analysis also shed light on the support system and challenges female leaders in higher education in Qatar faced. This chapter serves as a cross-case analysis and discussion chapter where I specifically note the connections between Padela's Islamic educational leadership framework based on the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the literature and my leaders' narratives.

Ultimately, I conclude my dissertation with a conclusion and implications of my research. This chapter includes a short summary of my research findings. I then detail the potential contributions of the study. I continue highlighting the implications for leaders, professional development organizers and future research. I also shed light on limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section provides a brief background about the State of Qatar, women and leadership in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), leadership theories from the Western perspective, and Islamic leadership theory and practice. The review begins with the context of Qatar as an Islamic State practicing Islam as the religion and practicing Shari'ah, the Islamic law as the legislative body. The review also provides a description of the evolution of education system in Qatar, its reforms, and efforts to make Qatar a knowledge-based economy. The next section highlights the Islamic beliefs and practices, significance of education and leadership in Islam, teachings of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and the principles of Islamic leadership as it pertains to education. The following section deals with the leadership definition and approaches in both Islamic and Western literature. The final section delves into the role of women and leadership in the GCC countries. It also sheds light on the status of Muslim women in the GCC countries, various challenges and ways women maneuver them.

Background of Qatar

Qatar is one of the Gulf States, which, only 11,247 kilometers in size, is very rich in oil and natural gas reserves. Qatar is also famous for its bold leadership and Qatar has transformed from a tribal society to modern state in just a few decades. The population of Qatar is very diverse with majority of expatriates and a small percentage of citizens. Qatar is led by a monarchy system after it gained independence from the British protectorate in 1971. The “Al Thani” tribe, being the most prominent in Qatar historically, is the ruling family. The first ruler or the Emir was Sheikh Mohammed bin Thani and his successive heirs are continuing to be the rulers. The current ruler is Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani who took over in 2013 from his father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Although Qatar practiced to be a true monarchy system, Sheikh Hamad was a little different and brought in ideas of “elected municipal councils and a legislative body” calling for democracy with his progressive ideas. The Islamic principles and code of life serves as the foundation for all rulers to follow during their reign (Brewer, et al., 2007).

Qatar was not known to have had a formal education until oil was discovered in the 1940s. Prior to that time, there had been informal classes known as “kuttab” taught by literate

men and women in mosques to read and write. The main goal was to educate children to memorize Quran, the holy book of Muslims and know Islam better (The Gulf-Times, 2012). By the early 20th century there were 12 “katatib” [the plural form of kuttab] where both boys and girls were educated in segregated system. It was in 1948 that the first school for boys opened and the subjects Islamic studies, arithmetic, geography, Islamic history, Arabic, and English were taught there. Governmental support for schools began in the 1951 and three other schools were established by 1954 (Brewer et al., 2007). Qatar has had a gender segregated school system right from the beginning of the kuttab system. Although originally boys and girls learned very separate subjects, in recent years, the curriculum of boys’ and girls’ schools have become similar. The first public school for girls was set up in 1956 by a prominent scholar Sheikh Al Mani who argued that Islam gives equal right for education to girls as well (Al-Misnad, 1985). While girls and boys have attended elementary and secondary schooling in almost equal ratio, recent enrollment figures for the academic year 2013-2014 show a total of 116,721 students in the primary education, and 38, 099 in secondary education in the year 2013-2014. Student enrollment in K-12 system overall approximately falls around 50% for both male and female students (Supreme Education Council [SEC], 2015, p. 9). Women have outnumbered men in higher education for much of the 20th century almost with double the numbers: men, 9,080 and women, 16, 388 (MDPS, 2015). This variation in gender enrollment is for several reasons: men had more opportunity to go abroad for higher education with government-funded scholarships, men tended to enter military or have job offers where they received training on site, and men took advantage of entrepreneurial initiatives to start their own business ventures. On the other hand, women entered higher education not only to overcome the boredom of staying home but also to change their status in society.

In the mid-1950s, the first Ministry of Education (MoE) was established and the education system continued to work under the ministry officials. They drew mostly from the Egypt education system borrowing the curricula and the textbooks until 1965. The MoE also borrowed books from the other Arab countries. From 1965 onwards, Qatar started using their own textbooks that were basically just a compilation of the Arab texts, failing to design a curriculum especially for Qatari students. The MoE witnessed a lot of success in a short span; the literacy rates among the Qatari increased (The Gulf-Times, 2012).

The MoE is a centralized governing body overseeing the public education system overall and some parts of the private education as well. The MoE also established the national education system in Qatar. Qatari government schools have three levels of education: primary (grades 1-6), preparatory (grades 7-9), and secondary (grades 10-12). The kindergarten level was not a part of the public education system and parents rely on the private institutions for preschool programs. The end of year exams determines the student promotion from one grade to the other. These exams are designed by a centralized committee of teachers. The students graduating with 50% and above receive a certificate at the end of secondary school program that qualifies them for higher education in the Arab countries.

Qatar hosts four types of schools of which three are private institutions and one is a fully government funded school. They are:

- Community schools: for expatriate children usually sponsored by the embassy of that particular country and follows the curriculum from the same country.
- International schools: for both expatriates and citizens, but not sponsored by embassies. It follows a foreign curriculum.
- Private Arabic schools: for Qataris [citizens of Qatar] and other Arab population. It follows the Arabic curriculum
- Public schools: that are government funded. (Brewer et al., 2007)

The recruitment of teachers, their supervision, evaluation, as well as the training was done by the MoE (Brewer et al., 2007, p. 25). About the private schools, the MoE is the decisive body when it comes to the curriculum and text books, however the funding is from private sources.

The higher education system also has a government-funded institution, Qatar University, which was established in 1973. Initially begun with just one college of education, now Qatar University hosts nine colleges: Arts and Sciences (CAS); Business and Economics (CBE); Education (CED); Engineering (CENG); Health Sciences (CHS); Law (LAWC); Medicine (CMED); Pharmacy (CPH); and Sharia and Islamic Studies (CSIS) (Qatar University, 2016). Being a National University, Qatar University is committed to meet the needs of its citizens and contribute to the development of its human capital, thus feeding well into the Qatar's national vision 2030. Another higher education hub called Qatar Foundation's Education city was

established by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Her Highness Moza bint Nasser Al-Misned in 1995. With about 20 years of efforts into “unlocking human potential,” Qatar Foundation hosts many Western universities and offers several degrees. They are Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, The Weill Cornell Medical College, Carnegie Mellon University, and Texas A&M to name a few. The foundation strives to support the QNV and develop “sustainable human capacity, social, and economic prosperity for a knowledge-based economy” (Qatar Foundation, 2016).

Since the 1970s, Qatar has implemented a labor law policy no.3 of 1962, where the Qatari citizens were given first preference in the workforce, followed by the expatriates. This is called the “Qatarization” policy that led Qataris to take the majority of administrative posts in Qatar (Ministry of Education, 1996). There is not any recent data on the nationality of teachers in the government schools in Qatar, however, the 2010-2011 annual report on schools and schooling published on the Ministry of Education website marks that only 24 percent of teachers are Qatari, 59 percent are Arabs, and the remaining 17 percent are non- Arabs (Ministry of Education, 2016). In the field of higher education, these figures vary: in its annual report, the national university of Qatar clearly shows that in the year 2013-2014 there were 80 Qatari and 427 non-Qatari males as compared to that of the 81 Qatari and 83 non-Qatari females working as faculty. This report also shows that Qatari women dominated the staff (non-faculty administrative positions across the institution) in this higher education institution as the numbers reveal. During the same year, there were 297 Qatari females and 101 Qatari males working as staff, yet the non-Qatari staff remained about the same for men and exceeded marginally with 50 more female staff (Qatar University Fact Book 2013-2014, 2015).

Educational reform in Qatar

This section focuses more on K-12 because this has been primary area of concern in Qatar. However, this review is relevant to the study of higher education in Qatar because it lays foundational understanding of the educational system in Qatar. Another reason is that there is a dearth of information on higher education system and reform in Qatar. Qatar has been critically assessing and evaluating their education system periodically. Since 1980s there were several efforts made to improve the education system. A 1990 study by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organization) pointed out three main areas for

improvement: the “high turnover of teachers, low status of teaching profession among Qatari nationals, and the differential treatment of Qatari and non-Qatari teachers in the school” (Brewer et al., 2007, p. 28). The MoE of Qatar conducted the next major study in 1996 and this reconfirmed the problems that UNESCO had stressed. The 1996 MoE study recommended improvement strategies of incorporating technology into teaching and learning processes, the development of libraries, and the diversification of secondary education by offering multiple subject combination opportunities (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Another study conducted by Al-Horr in 1998 surveyed other stakeholders in education; mainly the influential Qataris from several segments of the society. The main concerns raised in this report were: students were not learning the right material and skills; teachers were not qualified and many students had to rely on outside tutoring; and administrators were not planning well to manage a school effectively. The participants further recommended the development of clear vision and goals for education and they suggested programs and strategies to achieve those goals.

With all the concerns that these studies raised, in the 1990s the MoE opened one vocational school and two scientific secondary schools. The vocational school focused on technology and applied sciences whereas the scientific schools had the medium of instruction as English and their curriculum focus was science (Brewer et al., 2007). The scientific schools were intentionally designed to be able to develop their own instructional practices free from the MoE, although the budget was controlled by the MoE. The students eligible for these schools had to have earned 90% grades in their preparatory school to enroll into the scientific school and this itself produced positive outcomes because the students were all very well prepared. Yet, even as these scientific schools were improving, the public school system did not reflect any improvement. The student achievement scores remained low and the public school system was not producing graduates who could succeed in their postsecondary education or the workplace. Brewer et al. (2007) analyzed data from Ministry of Education website on student achievement and also interviewed Al-Misnad, the former president of Qatar University, who argued that regular secondary school graduates were not ready for university study in either Qatar or abroad. A general practice at this time was for student to undergo an Academic Bridge Program as a remedial program to train students for higher education.

With all these attempts to reform the education system yet producing no great outcomes, in the mid 2000s the Qatari government invited the RAND⁴ corporation to analyze the government education system and provide recommendations. After a thorough analysis of the data collected from multiple sources, RAND (2007) identified that although there were many prior efforts for reform; problems persisted, primarily because of a lack of “integrated vision for the education system” and also the lack of effective implementation strategies. In addition to four positive aspects of the system, RAND’s analysis identified fourteen main weaknesses with the education system. RAND team summarized these weaknesses as follows:

There was no vision of quality education and the structures needed to support it. The curriculum in the government is outmoded, under the rigid control of the Ministry of Education, and unchallenging, emphasized rote memorization. The system lacked performance indicators, and the scant performance information that it provided to teachers and administrators meant little to them because they had no authority to make changes in the schools... the national investment in schools was small. Teachers received low pay and little professional development, many school buildings were in poor condition, and classrooms were overcrowded. (Brewer et al., 2007, xviii)

In contrast, the positive aspects of the system included the fact that the Qatari leadership was familiar with the international developments and were interested in accepting change with enthusiastic and motivated staff. The leadership was also positive about accepting alternative schooling options (Brewer et al., 2007).

However, although the leadership expressed eagerness to reform, the RAND team emphasized that the hierarchical organization structure was itself operating with unclear rules and processes, which made it difficult to lead the education system efficiently in a “system-changing reform” (Brewer et al., 2007, p. 44). The researchers were aware that implementing a nationwide reform is risky, however, they laid out the potential risks to the Qatari leadership beforehand and left the decision to them.

⁴ [RAND](#) A non-profit global organization with its headquarters located in the United States that helps the policy makers for decision-making based on research and analysis of the current education system.

Based on the analysis of the education system, the RAND research team proposed a new design called the Education for a New Era (EFNE) reform. The reform rested on four pillars called “*variety, authority, incentives, and monitoring*” (Brewer et al., 2007, p. 51, emphasis added). The *variety* focused on the level of heterogeneity among schools in terms of school structure, curricula, and instructional practices, whereas, the *authority* clarified who would be playing the decision-making roles. Identified *incentives* focused on the awarding system and procedures and the evaluation patterns. *Monitoring* stressed the evaluation of students, teachers, and school and justify the evaluation’s purpose. RAND team also proposed three types of school for the reform: “a modified centralized model, a charter school model, and a voucher model” (Brewer et al., 2007). Noteworthy is that each of these schools would implement the four pillars of the reform in a different manner (see Brewer et al., 2007).

Of these three options, Qatari leadership selected the Charter school model to most fully invest in and enhance the education system of Qatar. This model “decentralized governance and encouraged variety through a set of independent schools” where parents had a choice to send their children to these schools (Brewer, et. al., 2007, p. xix). Furthermore, Qatari leaders wanted Islamic teachings to be continued in all government-funded schools and suggested RAND to change the charter school model to be called as “Independent school model” based on the appropriateness in the context. The independent school model had *autonomy, accountability, variety, and choice* as its four basic principles. Even though this model grounds on principles like choice and variety, RAND team borrowed from Hill and Bonan (1991) and suggested that in the independent school model there will be “common education standards reflective of student’s ability to succeed in both higher education and the local labor market” (Brewer et al., 2007, p. 64).

Furthermore, the RAND team proposed a new organizational structure with a separate office called the Supreme Education Council (SEC); this office replaced the Ministry of Education in November 2002 (Nasser et al., 2014). This reform marked the major shift from the centralized school system to the decentralized school system. The SEC had many institutes that operated under its control. There was an “implementation team” specially designed for the reform that functioned for a short period, an “education institute” that would help in the setting up the schools with financial and academic assistance, the “evaluation institute” that would

assess the performance of schools, teachers, students, and other service providers overall, and a “higher education institute” that would be responsible for guiding professional and career choices to students (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

In 2016, after a few years of this reform implementation, Qatari schools opted to revert to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education as its governing body. The Emiri resolution No. 9. of 2016 highlights that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education will perform “all forms of its tasks and responsibilities related to educational matter through departments such as educational supervision, curriculum and learning resources, government school and teachers’ affairs, students’ affairs, and early education” (Ministry of Education, 2016, para. 1). With this recent policy change, it is expected to transform the organizational structure and hierarchy of the governing bodies, however, the operation of schools and colleges remain the same at the local level in terms of organizational structure and leadership. The higher education system is also reforming at a rapid pace in Qatar with changes in the public higher education institution as well as the education city in Qatar, yet, research and literature around these educational institutions is scarce.

Islamic beliefs and practices

In this section, I highlight the Islamic beliefs and practices, significance of education and leadership in Islam, and teachings of the Prophet Muhammed and the Principles of Islamic Leadership as it pertains to education. Ali (1998) posits that Islam is a complete system of life and the word itself means peace and submission to the will of Allah. The two main sources that help Muslims submit to the will of Allah are: a) Quran, the divine scripture of Islam revealed to the last prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Angel Gabriel, and b) following Prophet Muhammad’s teachings called the Hadith recorded in two scholarly books Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari⁵. Shariah is basically derived from the application of these two sources in practice by Muslims (Abed, 2006). Further, Rahman (1994) argues that Islam is not only a religion, but also a “complete code of life” that is to be embraced holistically. There are five basic pillars of Islam that forms the foundation for Muslims to practice Islam for the good of the

⁵ Sahih Muslim is a collection of hadith compiled by Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Naysaburi (rahimahullah). His collection is considered to be one of the most authentic collections of the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), and along with Sahih al-Bukhari forms the "Sahihain," or the "Two Sahihs." It contains roughly 7500 hadith (with repetitions) in 57 books (<https://sunnah.com/muslim>)

individual as well as the community. One of the hadith interpreted by Al-Bukhari sums it all. Narrated by Ibn Umar: The Messenger of *Allah* (saw) stated that Islam is based on five things: “The testimony, offering prayers, paying *Zakat* (alms given to the poor), doing *Hajj* (pilgrimage), and observing *Saum* (fasting)” (Al-Bukhari, 1997, V. 1, Ch. 2, No. 8, p. 58 as cited in Aabed, 2015). The first pillar, declaration of faith or the testimony means “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet [messenger] of Allah.” The second pillar is to pray five times daily. Mufti (2013) adds that prayer enhances “spiritual strength and peace of mind” (para. 12). Third, is *Zakah* which means charity. To help the poor and the needy becomes an obligation on all Muslims who are wealthy. The fourth pillar is observing fasts during the month of Ramadan. During fasting, Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, and sexual relationships from dawn to sunset. Finally, the fifth pillar is offering pilgrimage to the holy city Makkah in Saudi Arabia.

In addition to these pillars of Islam, there are six articles of faith that form the core Islamic beliefs and supplement the foundation of Islamic belief system. Zeno (1996) states the pillars of Iman (faith) as 1. Belief in one God, 2. Belief in Angels, 3. Belief in Prophets of Allah, 4. Belief in revealed books of Allah, 5. Belief in the day of judgement, and 6. Belief in destiny and divine decree (also see Mufti, 2013). Al-Shahri (2016) cites from the Holy Quran to justify the existence of Muslims and summarizes that Islam is meant to encompass all these aforementioned foundational beliefs.

Islam is meant to encompass all aspects of a Muslim’s life, as stated in the Qur’an (the word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]): “Say (O Muhammad): verily my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of the whole universe” (Qur’an, 6:162 as cited in Al-Shahri, 2016, p. 636).

Further, Al-Sharhi adds that holistically Islam can be practiced the best by incorporating these beliefs in Muslims’ lives that ought to be guided with these Islamic beliefs and teachings. However, the degree to which these principles are practiced may vary among Muslims depending upon varying schools of thought and interpretation of religious texts. Al-Shahri also argues that following these beliefs and tenets of Islam is not just for the cause of worship from a ritual stance, rather these beliefs advocates all Muslims to establish and maintain an atmosphere that contributes to righteousness in every aspect of life (2016). Hence, the all-encompassing

nature of Islam in community life means that leadership values of that community have been a topic of study across history.

Understanding leadership approaches in Islamic and Western literature

Haddara and Enanny (2009) in their book on Islamic leadership analyze several leadership definitions (Dubrin, 2007; Yukl, 2006; Wenek, 2003) in Western literature and conclude that one common theme that underlies leadership definitions is that the “leadership involves influencing and motivating people to change their behavior or to attain certain goals” (2009) (p. 8). Several scholars disagree in their definitions of leadership, mostly because, as they argue, the complex nature of leadership involves several actors: leaders, followers and the context or situation itself. Essentially, this critique is that leadership is too complex a behavior to reduce to influence and motivation (Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 1999; see Aabed, 2006, p. 42). Moreover, Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) critique the lack of clear definition of leadership commenting “At its root, what does ‘leadership’ mean and, if we knew, we would be any better off?” (p.5). This emphasis on the confusing nature of leadership has arisen because of research on the complexity in leadership roles and is often referred to as Lotfi Zadeh’s “Law of incompatibility”⁶ because of the lack of a clear definition for leadership. Furthermore, some scholars have different opinions regarding the necessity of having a universal definition and argue, “as complexity rises, precise statements lose meaning and meaningful statements lose precision” (Zadeh, 1969; as cited by McNeil & Freiburger, 1993, p.43). As scholars have attempted to derive a clear definition of leadership within Western leadership literature, the same applies to defining Islamic leadership as well.

However, for laying the foundational knowledge of Islamic leadership, let us examine some of the definitions of Islamic leadership, though very scarce in literature. Egel (2014) summarized the core ideas of Islamic leadership embedding Islamic Leadership as a crucial part of Management from an Islamic perspective. Egel (2014, p. 13) relies on two main ideas of Islamic leadership:

⁶ “Law of Incompatibility” has its roots in the idea of “fuzzy logic” that analyzes the importance of precision when a reasonable answer suffices the need to understand any idea or concept.

a) “A process of inspiring and coaching voluntary followers in an effort to fulfill a clear as well as shared vision” (Altalib, 1991), and

b) “a social process in which the leader seeks to achieve certain organizational goals by garnering the support from relevant stakeholders-primary followers- while fully complying to Islamic teachings and principles” (Toor, 2008, p. 26)

Beekun and Badawi (1999) in their book *Leadership: An Islamic Perspective* identified vision as one of the main criteria for defining leadership that is common to both Western and Islamic leadership. However, they delved further and suggested leadership as a “social exchange process” that requires leaders to communicate their vision clearly with followers thereby making leadership a mutual responsible process. Citing from the Quran, Beekun and Badawi (1999, p. 11) reinforce the idea of voluntary participation of the followers to achieve the organizational goals: “Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things” (Qur’an, Baqarah, 2:256). The key idea is to engage the followers upon their own consent and not by force.

Evolution of leadership theories and practice

Leadership discussions and research can be dated back to pre-modern times, both in the Islamic context and generally. Northouse (2004) broadly summarizes that the early Western leadership theories focused on the traits of leaders, so did the research focus on studying the characters and traits of leaders. Then, the discourse shifted and emphasized that leadership skills can be taught and learned following which and several theories emerged, often drawing in contextual factors (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). To provide a detailed analysis of leadership theories, I draw from Roberts’ (2007) book *Deeper Learning in Leadership: Helping College Students Find the Potential Within* where he bridges the gap between theory and practice that many leadership resources fail to do. Roberts (2007) draws from abundant leadership literature and combines it with his own leadership narratives emphasizing that deeper learning in leadership “is not only a journey for our students but, indeed, a constant journey for those of us who study, teach, and develop leadership with students” (p. x). In his analysis, Roberts (2007) draws from Komives, Lucas, and McMohan (1998, 2007), an often replicated general overview

of the development of Western leadership theories. He posits that the trajectory of leadership theories has evolved over time and that leads to the current understanding of leadership.

The most common taxonomies of leadership begin with the Great Man theory that existed from mid 1800s to early 1900s. The famous saying “leaders are born, not made” belongs to this era justifying that leaders have superior abilities “rooted in the presumptions of royalty and the privileged class traditions” as compared to the other members of the society that usually labelled them heroes and heroines (Roberts, 2007, p. 42). Following this came the trait theory from 1907 to 1947 where the traits of leaders were of importance rather than the family inheritance. Furthermore, the traits such as attractive appearance, ingenuity, perseverance, intelligence and so forth were argued to be natural characteristics rather than those that are learned. Behavior theory succeeded the trait theory from 1950s to 1980s lasting for about three decades. The discourse shifted to emphasize the behavioral skills of leaders who were successful at leading and found some consistent leadership behaviors that posit “there is one best way to lead and that to be effective required combining relational and task dimensions in leadership” (Roberts, 2007, p. 23). In contrast, situational and contingency theories (1950s to 1960s) challenged the behavioral leadership theory from two perspectives. First, leaders did not practice the same behaviors in all circumstances and second, leaders displayed different characteristics in different situations that had different effects on one circumstance than others. Next, the focus moved to influence models that began in mid-1920s but came into light later and lasted until 1977. This theory emphasized leadership as a social exchange process that focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers with the ability to influence as one of the main characteristic. Then began the reciprocal models of leadership (1978 to the present) that emphasized the benefit of all persons as a core feature of leadership. Therefore, the relationships ought to be constructive and include an exchange of benefit; a transaction that might not necessarily be equally beneficial but that which includes any form of transaction that satisfies all parties. Finally, the chaos and systems theory (1990 to the present) began where the leadership theory and styles had to fit the ever-changing world. Advocates of chaos theory argue that leaders cannot anticipate the function and control of an organization accurately; rather they argue; when chaos prevails there is an interaction with the natural system that paves a way for many possibilities to enhance leadership role (Roberts, 2007, p. 42-45).

There are several other analyses of leadership theories and models existing in literature (see Northouse, 2004; Covey, 2004; Kezar, Carducci, and McGavin, 2006). However, for this study, I draw upon six leadership models that Roberts (2007) has summarized based on its popularity as well as its effectiveness in working with students. My emphasis on these six leadership theories is based on my analysis of how each aligns or complements Islamic leadership theory (see Aabed, 2006; AlSarhi et. al., 2014; Padela, 2015; Rost, 1993; Roberts, 2007). By understanding these six western theories, we can better understand the intersection of western leadership ideas with Islamic leadership theory. The first western leadership theory to focus on is Greenleaf's Servant Leadership (1977) that advocates leaders to be servants first so that the subordinates would in turn become "healthier, wiser, more autonomous, more likely themselves to be servants" (1977, p. 13; as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 49). Furthermore, servant leaders usually possess characteristics such as willingness to act, pursue a dream and engage others in it, be empathetic, listen, understand others, effective communication, and so forth. Another important characteristic of servant leaders as Roberts summarizes is "intuition and foresight allow servant leaders to be more aware and perceptive and grant them the confidence to face the unknown" (2007, p. 49).

The second is Burns' Transforming leadership theory which notes a mutual transformation of persons engaged in an activity that is of both leaders and followers "to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns, 1978, p. 20; as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 50). Burns differentiated transactional leadership that involves rewards for achieving certain set goals with that of transforming leadership that seeks motivation of followers as a core principle to achieve a goal. Moreover, this transforming leadership is associated to a larger collective purpose for a social change. Roberts (2007) also elaborates that Bernard Bass (1985) extended this transforming leadership to a formal transformational leadership theory. Bass and Avolio (1990) define transformational leadership as a practice that motivates and inspires their followers in order to achieve more than what is usually expected by addressing their needs, cultivating a culture of trust and respect. Additionally, it calls for leaders to empower employees and create an atmosphere of productiveness and work towards the good of the organization (Northouse, 2004; Dubrin, 2001). Transformational leadership has four main components: inspirational motivation; idealized influence; intellectual stimulation; and individualized consideration (Bass, 1998). *Inspirational motivation* is the ability of leaders to motivate followers to achieve high

expectations and accomplish a shared vision of the organization. *Idealized influence* includes transformational leaders who are “admired, respected and trusted” by their followers (Bass, 1998, p. 5). Furthermore, the relationship between the leaders and followers becomes more informal here. *Intellectual stimulation* encourages followers to be creative and innovative further challenging their own beliefs and move away from rigid organizational thinking. This supports the followers to try new ways of dealing with organizational issues. Finally, *individualized consideration*, as the name suggests is a leadership characteristic that pays attention to the individual needs of followers.

The third is Kouzes and Posner’s (1987, 2002) proposed model derived from the personal leadership stories from both private and public-sector leaders unlike the traditional leadership theories and styles. They called their model “Leadership Challenge” and Roberts (2007) summarizes its five practices and commitments in a five-stage model: First, in “Model the Way,” aspiring leaders find their own voice and set an example. In Stage 2, leaders inspire a shared vision by envisioning the future and enlisting others in that vision. In Stage 3, leaders challenge the standard process by searching for opportunities, experimenting, and taking risks in their leadership. In Stage 4, leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and strengthening the work of others. Finally, in Stage 5, leaders recognize the contributions of others and celebrate values and victories (Roberts, 2007, p. 53, 54). While this stage theory does not progress along these steps, Roberts (2007) asserts that leadership challenge model is widely used mainly because of the five practices and ten commitments (see Roberts, 2007) that are easy to implement in leadership practice since it is compiled from research based in a variety of settings.

The fourth is Rost’s Postindustrial Leadership (1991, 1993) which is most popularly recognized leadership theory and Rost’s “Leadership Development in the New Millennium” (1993) is frequently cited in research. Rost moved the conventional leadership studies’ focus from “leading” to “developing leadership” (Roberts, 2007, p. 55). For Rost, leadership is “an influence relationship among leadership and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (1993, p. 99). Moreover, the focus of leadership here is based on relational capacity by mutual contribution of both leaders and followers. He also clarified that this capacity is not seen “as a singular trait of unique individuals and embraced the possibility

that all people have leadership potential” (Roberts, 2007, p. 55). Rost’s elaborates his postindustrial leadership model with five points that serve as a framework for his model:

to stop concentrating on the leader, to conceive of leadership as an episodic affair, to train people to use influence, to develop people’s ability to work within noncoercive relationships, and to help people understand the nature of real—that is, transformative—change. (p. 102–107; as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 56)

Thus, it Rost’s and Burns’ leadership model both complement each other especially in terms of their focus on transformation.

The fifth is a leadership model based on seven core values as proposed by the Higher Education Research Institute (1996). This model is called the “Ensemble’s” social change model of leadership development because of the seven C’s associated to its core values. They are categorized under three main headings: individual, group, and society and community as “consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship” (as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 57). Furthermore, the authors of this social change model believed that these seven C’s interacted with each other to accomplish the goal of social change.

Finally, the sixth is the Relational Leadership as laid out by Komives, Lucas, and McMohan (1998, 2007). The authors in their exemplary text *Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference* define leadership as a “relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change” (2007, p. ix; as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 60). Moreover, Roberts confirms that this definition is a derivative of both Rosts’ definition including several aspects of Social Change model proposed by Higher Education Research Institute. Komives et al. (2007) call this relational leadership as a model rather than a theory that includes five core components: “inclusive, empowering, purposeful, ethical, and process-oriented” (Roberts, 2007, p. 60).

In addition to these six leadership theories/models summarized by Roberts (2007), understanding the differences between manager and a leader is essential to understand the leadership literature thoroughly from both Islamic and Western perspective. As Davis (1967) remarks,

Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is a human factor, which binds a group together and motivates it towards goal.

Management activities such as planning, organizing, decision making are dormant cocoons until the leader triggers the power of motivation in people and guides them toward their goals. (p. 96)

Therefore, it is evident that a leader plays a far more crucial role than a manager does. Bennis' explanation further justifies this rationale:

The difference between managers and leaders is fundamental. The manager administers, the leader innovates. The manager maintains, the leader develops. The manager relies on systems, the leader relies on people. The manager counts on control, the leader counts on trust. The manager does things right, the leader does the right thing. (1988, p. 173)

From Islamic leadership perspective, Beekun and Badawi (1999) emphasized that it is necessary to acknowledge the differences between a manager and a leader as the plethora of research does. Nevertheless, they also added that Islamic organizations need both managers and leaders as “leaders can reframe experience to open new possibilities; managers can provide a sense of perspective and order so that the new possibilities become a reality” (p. 12).

Islamic Leadership in Education

Jubran (2015) studied Islamic leadership from an educational perspective and summarized early and contemporary ideas on educational Islamic leadership, the educational leadership roles, as well as the styles of Islamic leadership based on his analysis of Islamic leadership literature. According to Jubran, leadership has been defined by early Muslim scholars as ‘wilaya,’ ‘Imamah,’ and ‘Khalifah.’ To define these qualities, Jubran borrows from Ibn Taymiyah (661-728 AH) and explains *wilaya* as “maintaining the religion of the people such that, if it is lost, they will be the losers, and maintaining a life that will assist people to understand their religion” (as cited by Jubran, 2015, p. 29). Further, Al Mawardi (957-1058) explained *Imamah* as the “guarding of the religion and life...an obligatory system for all Muslims” (quoted in Basbous, 1988, p. 47; Al-Wakil, 1988, p. 22). Finally, *khilafa* is to “assist people to live in accordance with the Islamic rules as a guidance for their interests in this world and in the Hereafter” (as cited by Jubran, 2015, p. 29). In addition to these foundational

thoughts, Jubran also shed light on contemporary definitions that highlight various attributes of a leader such as being influential and visionary. However, for Jubran (2015) Islamic leadership has a unique role of guiding people to good in this world and the Hereafter. He argues that “leadership does not deal with the mere objectives of the organization,” but rather, “the objectives of any organization must be connected with the religion’s objectives” (p. 30).

Aabed (2006) studied the Islamic leadership theory and practice in K-12 Michigan Islamic schools. I agree with Aabed that Rost’s (1991) definition of leadership is an appropriate model for Islamic leadership encompassing “the most critical dimensions of leadership as a process of interaction between the leader, the followers, and the situation because leadership effectiveness is dependent on the leader, the followers, and the situation (Jabnoun, 1994). Complementing this definition, is Beekun and Badawi’s definition that “Leadership is a *trust* (Amaanah). It represents a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them, and to treat them justly” (1999, p. vii). Although, these scholars have approached Islamic perspective from different lenses, one common thread grounds it, that is understanding leadership on the basis of Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Therefore, with these foundational definitions, I rely on Rost’s and Beekun and Badawi’s definition of leadership to analyze female leaders’ understanding of leadership from their perspective and ways it aligns with the literature.

Several other authors studied the Islamic leadership in K-12 settings in different geographical contexts and from different perspectives (Padela, 2015; Aabed, 2006; Saleemad, Eamoraphan, & Vinitwatanakhun, 2012). AlSarhi, Salleh, Mohammed, and Abdullah (2014) compared the Western and Islamic perspective of leadership arguing that the lack of literature on Islamic leadership is the main drive in analyzing the two perspectives. In addition, they argue that this lack has further contributed to the undeniable fact that even the leaders of Muslim countries adopt similar leadership theories and practices. Therefore, these scholars differentiate the Western and Islamic leadership based on two main sources: a) the revealed sources from the Almighty Allah, and b) the rationally derived theories from research. The former one is called *Naqly* that is drawn from Al-Quran and the Sunnah of the prophet Muhammed (PBUH), and the latter is called *Aqly* that analyzes the scholarly research on Islamic leadership similar to that of the West. They further argue that Naqly sources calls for a strong commitment from leaders in

terms of “*Tawheed (believe in one God), Ibadah (worship), and guided by shari’ah (Islamic law already determined)*” (AlSarhi et al., 2014). Therefore, the Naqly serves as the foundation in deriving the ten facets of Islamic leadership and conclude that both the Western and Islamic leadership to be mostly similar, however, AlSarhi et al. (2014) also highlighted several differences. Table 2.1 below summarizes these ten facets.

Table 2.1

Leadership of the West (WL) and the Islamic leadership (IL)

| <u>Facet</u> | <u>Similarities in both WL and IL</u> | <u>Differences</u> |
|---|--|---|
| Leadership Definition (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Yukl, 2006; Rost, 1993; Beekun & Badawi, 1999) | Leadership is seen as a process not a position; situational, an interaction between leaders-followers, influential (Jabnoun, 1994) | IL Emphasis on the Naqly components, the Hereafter, the notion of trust (Amaanah) and doing good deeds for the sake of Allah. |
| The Leadership process (Williams, 2009; Rost, 1991; Mohamed, 2008) | A relationship between the leader and his followers to achieve commonly shared goals (Rost, 1991) | Attention paid to succession. IL practices succession through dialogue however WL has a fixed succession pattern that focuses more on leading and influencing followers |
| On power-influence (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977) | Some common powers exercised by leaders in both literatures are positional power (expert power, referent power, legitimate power, reward power, coercive power) and personal power such as the referent and expert power (Beekun & Badawi, 1999) | Same, no significant differences |
| On moral aspects (Greenleaf, 1977, Sergiovanni, 1996) | Both encompass values, ethics, principles, virtues, morality, spirituality, and authenticity (Sergiovanni, 1996; Beekun, 2006). | IL adds two more to these seven components: the guardianship and service-oriented (Beekun, 2006) |
| Servant-leader concept (Greenleaf, 1977) | Trust, sacrifice, relationships, ‘first helping, then leading’ are some core ideas (Greenleaf, 1977; Chowdhury, 2002) | IL stresses on the idea of servant as a dual obligation to both Allah and the people |

Table 2.1 Continued

| <u>Facet</u> | <u>Similarities in both WL and IL</u> | <u>Differences</u> |
|---|---|--|
| Leadership traits (Bittel, 1984) | Both WL and IL accept traits as one of the significant factors for successful leadership (Bittel 1984, Jabnoun, 1994) | No differences |
| Situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) | Both accept situational leadership style (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Ghazali, 1999). | IL further emphasizes characteristics such as trust, flexibility, and understanding of the followers in addition to the situational leadership style (Sharfuddin, 1987). |
| Transactional leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990) | WL identifies transactional leadership for extrinsic rewards to motivate its followers (Bittel, 1984). IL does not advocate for transactional leadership | IL does not agree to this extrinsic rewards pattern of leadership mainly because of its affinity to the worldly affairs because “he [a leader/follower] does not need to wait for the reward” (AlSehri et al., 2014, p. 50) to serve the organization rather, it is a moral obligation and commitment of a leader to serve their followers |
| Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Rost, 1993) | Both IL and WL practice the four main components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2001; Bass & Avolio, 1990) | Transformational leadership is more evident in Islamic literature (Bangash, 2001). |
| Transcendental leadership (Rost, 1993) | Both WL and IL accept transcendental leadership. The main characteristics being wisdom, justice, integrity, courage, patience, ethics, etc. (Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Collins, 2001) | IL leadership adds more characteristics to it such as the abilities (personal and physical appearances as well), thus “the Islamic model emphasizes leaders must have certain qualities to make people follow them” (Beekun & Badawi, 1999; as cited in Al Sehri et al., 2014). |

Note: Analyzed and summarized from “The West and Islam perspective of Leadership,” by N. Z. Al Sehri, L. M. Salleh, Mohammed Z. A, & A. A. Abdullah, 2014. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, p. 47-53.

Several faculties in the leadership and management department in University Sains Islam Malaysia carried out another significant research. This research was an extension of their previous study to develop themes that will form basis for an Islamic leadership Inventory (Mahazan et al., 2015). The initial study had focused on three forms of literature for their analysis. First, the Quran and Hadiths, second, managerial leadership and servant leadership literature, and third, contemporary Islamic leadership literature that resulted in nineteen themes as the underlying Islamic leadership behaviors. These literature sources were supplemented with the fourth that is the classical texts of Islamic leadership that escalated these nineteen themes to twenty-five. The twenty-five themes are (1) Trustworthiness and Integrity, (2) Employees Orientation, (3) Self-evaluation, (4) Patience, (5) Outcome Orientation, (6) Empowerment, (7) Social Responsibility (8) Flexibility (9) Non-Calculative, (10) Spirituality, Religiousness and Piety, (11) Esprit De Corps, (12) Bravery, (13) Justice and Equity, (14) High Self-Reliance and High Self-Esteem, (15) Modesty and Shyness, (16) Impartially, (17) Moderation and Balance, (18) Good in Communication, (19) Free from environmental-constraints, (20) Earnest, (21) Cheerful, (22) Feared when angry, (23) Empowering Intelligent, Wisdom and Encourage Synergy, (24) Role Model, and (25) Avoid Conflict. Moreover, Mahazen et al. (2015) revisited the Quran and Hadiths during their data analysis to conclude with these above-mentioned themes. For instance, the theme *trustworthiness* and *integrity* was framed based on inventory items such as “I strive to fulfill the organization’s trust; I lead by following the guideline set by the organization” (2014, p.726) is stressed upon in Qur’an as “Not to betray the trust” (Qur’an; A’raf: 27). Another theme, *empowerment* was a derivative of the inventory items such as “I have to be fair and give my trust in delegating tasks to my employees, irrespective of their gender; I introspect the situation and make thorough decision. Scale of parity is what I use to avoid any partiality” (2014, p. 726). The idea of empowerment is emphasized in the Holy Qur’an as “being fair to all” (An-Nisa: 1). Furthermore, the scholars justified that these themes are aligned with Maqasid Al-Shariah; the higher level of Islamic Shariah perspective. Mahazan et al. (2015) borrow from Al-Fasi (2011) to define Maqasid Al-Shariah as

to understand the Islamic belief and goals from Shariah perspective in addition to unfolding secrets in any given matter prescribed by Islamic law. Knowledge of Maqasid Al-Shariah is essential for a mujtahid [jurist] when delivering opinions, especially when there is a difference in opinion. (p. 155)

Finally, Mahazan et al. argue that the conventional leadership literature, especially on managerial and servant leadership prevails in Islamic leadership context too, however in addition to these conventional skills, leaders ought to have the skills and behaviors identified as the twenty-five themes upon comprehensively analyzing the Islamic texts and teachings. In addition to identifying these themes in the light of Qur'an and hadith, Mahazen et al. ensure that these 25 themes align with the philosophy of Maqasid Al-Shariah. Al-Allaf (2013) explain that there are five principles of Maqasid Al-Shariah that a person or organization needs to be based their actions and decisions upon. They are preservation of religion, preservation of life, preservation of intellect, preservation of progeny, and preservation of property that are essential for “every human existence” (Mahazen et.al., 2015, p. 160). The following figure 1, illustrates the link between these themes, Maqasid al-Shariah, and the Muslim leader itself (adapted from Mahazan et al., 2015, p. 160).

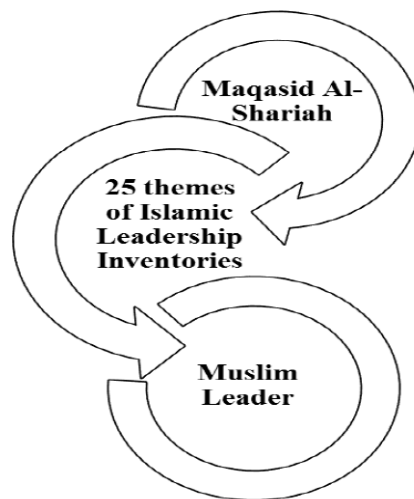


Figure 1. Maqasid al-Shariah and Islamic leadership inventories as the foundation for Muslim leaders by Mahazan et al. (2015)

It explains that these 25 themes for Islamic Leadership Inventory were derived from Maqasid Al-Shariah that in turn forms the core of Muslim leaders. Moreover, this figure conveys at least two perspectives. One, the foundational framework of all leadership actions and decisions ought to be based on Maqasid Al-Shariah. Two, that these 25 themes are identified by a thorough content analysis of the Holy Qur'an (Mahazen et.al., 2015, p. 160). Therefore, they reiterate that

leadership actions and decisions based on these themes will lead to effective Muslim leaders reflecting Islamic leadership generally.

Padela (2015) contributes to the existing Islamic leadership literature and posits that humans were created for the sole purpose to worship God (Al-Attas, 1993; Beekun and Badawi, 2005), and further argue that any action that is taken in conformation to the Islamic law correlates to worship (Chittick, 2007). Therefore, leadership from this perspective becomes a form of worship. Beekun and Badawi (2005) further add that to successfully implement Islamic leadership style it is ought to be coupled with *Sunnah*⁷ as a reference to their leadership. *Sunnah*, reinforces leadership as an *amana* (trust) that makes leadership as an accountable deed to God as well as humanity (Padela, 2015; Beekun & Badwai, 1999). Mir (2010) elaborates this discussion further positing that Islamic leadership is of a dual nature incorporating these two concepts: a) *Haqooq Allah*- the rights of God over humanity; b) *Haqooq Al- Abad*- the rights of humanity over each other.

How do these scholars apply these ideas of Islamic leadership to educational leadership? Islamic leadership research initially began by identifying the traits of Muslim leaders and did not construct clear leadership models or theories (Ali, 2012; Sidani, 2008). As Padela (2015) emphasizes, the scholars' approach to leadership and management was rooted in faith (Ali, 2012). Beekun and Badawi (1999) summarize that the Islamic leadership studies have recently taken two routes; they either study the Islamic leadership literature and derive a theory or adapt the existing leadership models into a particular context. In this study, which examines the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar to further explore the ways they maneuver their leadership roles in light of Islamic leadership theory and practice, I will examine the female leadership narratives in the light of Padela's Islamic educational leadership model in a higher education setting.

Padela (2015) in his dissertation develops an Islamic leadership model for school leaders in the Islamic Schools in the United States. Based on the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), he deploys a qualitative grounded theory methodology to develop the themes of Islamic leadership. Analyzing Western leadership theories such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and situational leadership in the light of Islamic educational

⁷ Sunnah is an Arabic word which means a path or a way. It is a primary source of law taken from the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). (<http://www.islaamnet.com/whatisunnah.html#2>)

leadership; Padela posits that these leadership models offer insight and “do not necessarily conflict with any Islamic teachings,” however, “they are not rooted in the Islamic tradition and may not have the same credibility as a leadership theory that is grounded within the Islamic tradition and the Prophet Muhammed’s Sunnah” (2015, p. 6). Padela (2015) concludes two main categories as characterizing Islamic leadership: Modeling and directing behaviors and motivating followers to a theocentric worldview. These findings emerge from his extensive study of a standard textbook of Hadith, *Riyad al-Salihin*. Uthaymeen (1998) clarifies that there are 1,896 hadith that have been taught and read for centuries, until now from this source. Upon extensive analyses of these Hadith, Padela (2015) conclude “Modeling and Directing behaviors” as a core conceptual category that highlights the leadership behavior of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The two tables below reveal Padela’s (2015) findings on the Hadith:

Table 2.2

Leadership Behaviors of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
Conceptual Category: Modeling and Directing Behaviors

| <u>Conceptual category</u> | <u>Themes (Leadership Behaviors)</u> | <u>Properties</u> |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Modeling and directing behaviors | Personalized leadership | Leadership roles Role Modeling |
| | Relationship with God and humanity | Devotion to God Concern for followers |
| | Treatment of People | Promoting gentleness Promoting justice Promoting welfare of the weak |
| | Adaptive leadership | Follower potential |

Note: From Padela, A. I. (2015). *A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad’s leadership behaviors: A Model for Islamic School Principals*. Doctoral dissertation. Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243, p. 64

Padela (2015) examined the Sunnah and conceptually studied the leadership behaviors of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) concluding that modeling and directing behaviors are the core characteristics. The four main themes bear some properties that characterize each theme as seen in the table 2.2. This analysis summed up that “Prophet Muhammed believed that everyone had a contextual leadership role, and that leadership was personalized on a person’s social, political and economic standing” (Padela, 2015, p. 66), thus emphasizing leadership roles in personal as well as official settings. Examining the hadith, leadership ought to be given to people with

appropriate skills to avoid any harm to the society, as ignorant leaders may go astray and lead others to astray as well (Riyadh al-salihin, Hadith 1392). Further analysis shed light on role modeling as is in the Western literature too. However, for Muslims, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) embodied all the virtues and characteristics as a role model and as a true leader from Islamic perspective. Relationship to God and humanity; this dual nature as discussed earlier serves as one of the obligation for leaders to develop in their role. The next theme, treatment to people stressed on promoting gentleness, justice and welfare of the weak. Another lens offered by Padela (2015) was that the first three themes as the *leader-centered theory* model whereas the final theme adaptive leadership is a *follower-context* model where the capacity and potential of the followers were borne in mind and specific decisions were made.

The second main category Padela (2015) emphasized was to develop an Islamic Educational Leadership model to aid school leaders within Islamic schools in the United States. However, I believe this model can be implemented to the field of higher education as well. Table 2.3 shows Padela's Islamic educational leadership model that is embedded in the theocentric worldview or in Islamic terms a *tawhid* centered model.

Table 2.3

Islamic Educational Leadership Model based on Leadership behaviors of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Conceptual Category: Developing a Theocentric Worldview

| <u>Conceptual category</u> | <u>Themes (Leadership Behaviors)</u> | <u>Properties</u> |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Developing a theocentric worldview | Fidelity to God and His prophet | Active reflection Precedence of the afterlife |
| | Developing a faith-based identity | Ummah Familial ties Social responsibility Preventing harm |

Note: From Padela, A. I. (2015). *A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership behaviors: A Model for Islamic School Principals*. Doctoral dissertation. Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243, p. 77.

This conceptual category focuses on two main themes: fidelity to God and His prophet that encompasses active reflection and belief in precedence of the afterlife, so that the actions and decisions remind the leader of God and the reflexive nature reinforces accountability to God.

Islamic leadership theory thus has a lot to say about how educational leadership can change the current practices to create an educational system that is more of a collaborative effort from all stakeholders.

Some of the most recent studies on Islamic leadership that came out as a special issue in the *Journal of Educational Administration and History* (May, 2018) highlights the misconceptions of Islam in the west by sharing counter narratives from Muslim educators, leaders, and students mostly in the context of United States and a few international studies. Brooks (2018) stresses that due to the lack of understanding of Islam and education by non-Muslims worldwide, Islamic education is viewed as contradicting to the western values. Hence, Brooks (2018) argues, “this islamophobic rhetoric has led Muslims to experience harassment, discrimination, and marginalization” (p. 51). Brooks and Mutohar (2018) analyze extant literature on Islamic leadership and develop a conceptual framework for Islamic school leadership. The inner core includes Islamic school leadership beliefs that is surrounded by Islamic school leadership values.

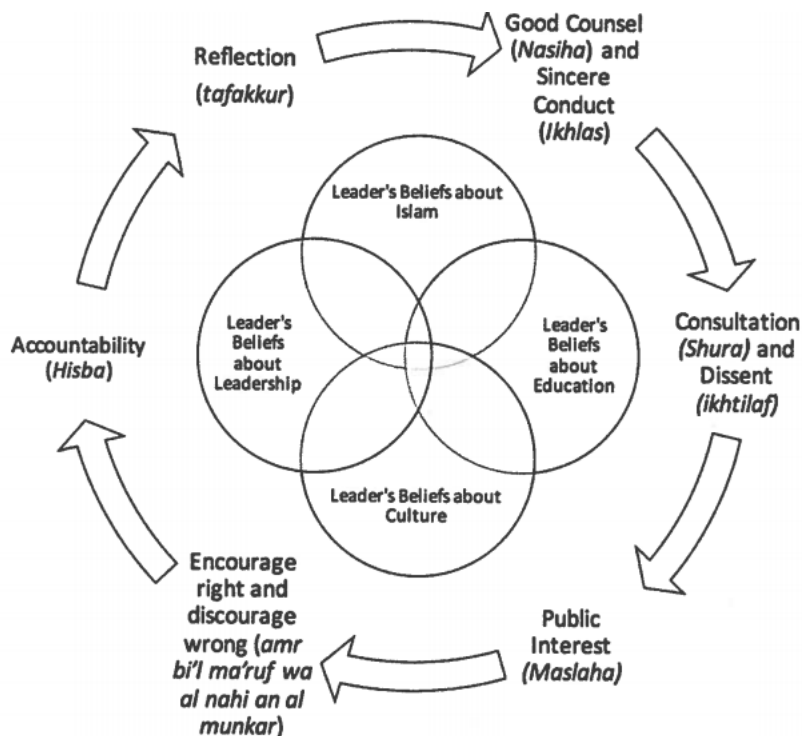


Figure 2. A conceptual framework for Islamic school leadership by Brooks & Mutohar (2018)

To understand the framework that is extracted from Qur'anic values, one must read starting clockwise. A leader is required to exhibit good counsel and sincere conduct, engage in consultation and dissent, focus on the interest of public, encourage the right and discourage the wrong by working ethically, be accountable for leadership actions, and engage in constant reflection. These values then influence each leader's personal beliefs about Islam, education, culture and leadership (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, p. 56). Furthermore, these authors also clarify that a Muslim leader's values may differ from another Muslim leader, hence it may change the direction of arrows depending upon what value that leader focuses on most. This will in turn have a personalized leadership framework for each leader. For instance, one leader may practice extensive reflection, whereas another leader may engage in extensive consultation in their leadership roles. Hence, this framework is beneficial for Islamic school leaders and authors suggest that this framework be implemented and "testes, refined, extended, interrogated, and possibly refuted through empirical inquiry" (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, p. 64).

Another study in this special issue is a historical analysis of four Islamic scholars between the years of 932 and 1113 A. D during Islam's golden age. Arar and Haj-Yehia (2018) carry out a hermeneutic content analysis and "identified leadership characteristics evident in early Islam and constructed a conceptual infrastructure to guide educational leadership" (p. 69). This research enhances our knowledge on Islamic leadership in the golden age that could help bridge gaps between leadership in Islamic and non-Islamic contexts. Maysaa Barakat (2018) studies "about the rights of Muslim students to receive equitable public education opportunities that recognize their cultural rights as a minority in the U.S." (p. 82). With autoethnographic approach, she argues that a large number of Muslims in the United States are schooling their children in faith-based private schools instead of public schools for their education. Barakat (2018) triggers a crucial conversation around assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism through her personal experiences as a Muslim educator.

Khalil and DeCuir (2018) center female leaders' agency as an emancipatory praxis to combat injustice and oppression further aligning with the core principles of Islamic Feminism. This is an empirical study that describes Muslim female school leaders' practices. They found that Muslim female school leaders prioritize equity, community, and resistance when leading American Islamic Schools. Khalil and Decuir (2018) interview thirteen Muslim female school leaders and from a critical feminist perspective, the authors also considered autoethnography as a

methodological bricolage. They found that leaders' intersectional identities, especially their religious and gendered identity influenced and informed their leadership practices to advance their school communities. This research has combined the feminist scholarship and Islamic leadership literature to create an Islamic feminist school leadership framework. Their data-driven themes centered around three main categories: (a) leading by modelling an equitable, and just ethic; (b) leading by nurturing a communal culture and, (c) leading for transformational resistance. I believe this study overlaps with my research extensively and adds the voices of Muslim women school leaders to a broader discourse of anti-imperialist and anti-racist school leadership practices, as Khalil and DeCuir rightly posit. Finally, Ezzani and King present an oral history of an American Muslim educational leader and U. S. public schools unpacking the true essence of "jihad or struggle of Muslim students to deal with Islamophobia" (p. 113). This study offers valuable insights into Islamic leadership that helps demystify stereotypes against Islam and Muslims. Therefore, these studies add invaluable timely literature to my research on female leadership narratives of Muslim women in higher education in Qatar.

Women and Leadership

Women in leadership positions is a longstanding research topic in Western Scholarship. Research on women in leadership in the United States is carried out along many streams from "corporate boardrooms to halls of Congress, from universities to the courts, from religious institutions to philanthropic organizations" (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2016, p. ix). In the last 50 years in the West, there have been terrific gains in women's education and an increase in female workforce participation, however men continue to "greatly outnumber women in leadership, especially top positions" (AAUW, 2016, p. ix). In their recent report *Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership*, the American Association of University Women [AAUW], a non-profit organization that advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research argue that there is extensive research concerning women's issues and the encourage individual women to "stand up, step up, lean in, and make their voices heard" (p. ix) yet, the gender gap in leadership is huge and still persists. The AAUW report examines the gender leadership gap and digs further in the past to explore the strategies that have helped narrow that gap. Finally, they also recommend some strategies to implement change collectively in contrast to individual recommendations. The 2015 Pew Research Center

survey on women and leadership (2015) seeks public opinion on how women perform as leaders as compared to that of men and concluded that the public sees only minimal differences in men and women in “key leadership traits such as intelligence and capacity for innovation, with many saying they’re stronger than men in terms of being compassionate and organized leaders” (p. 4). This study finds that contemporary women do not see balancing work-family as the biggest barrier to their leadership roles; rather they argue that there are double standards for women obstructing them to reach top leadership positions (PEW Research Center, 2015). Grogan and Shakeshaft confirm this, “women leaders strive for balance between responsibilities at work and at home” (2011, p. 21). Yet, the question of gender inequity in leadership still remains.

Numbers say it all, in the gender disparity, all work spheres that discriminate women leaders. The Catalyst report *Women CEOs of the S&P 500* show that only 5 percent of women are CEOs (2015). Noteworthy is that, White men and Asian men reach up to the senior executive level and White women are comparatively at an advantage over these Asian men according to the AAUW study. Furthermore, Hispanic and Black women are found the least in leadership positions. The disparity continues in terms of wages where “women make only 27 percent of those who are paid \$100,000 or more per year” (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; as cited in AAUW, 2016). Of this only 4 percent of Hispanic and Black women fall into these income patters. In the political sphere, women leaders are again less likely to secure a position in politics. AAUW list out that there are only six women as governors out of 50 and of that only two are women of color (Center of American Women and Politics, 2016). Either there are few women in leadership positions or if women are present, they are underrepresented in both business and nonprofit sectors (Boston Club, 2015). Furthermore, this gap exists in all the professions and that it is more sensitive for women of color (Catalyst, 2015). There is of course a power component associated to leaders, and if women are denied access to top leadership, it raises serious equity issues that need be addressed. However, AAUW report explains that achieving greater gender diversity may inversely effect teamwork because of varied values, perceptions, and cognitive styles diverse leaders may bring, yet the benefits outweigh as it instills creativity and embed diverse knowledge and perspectives to yield new ideas (2016).

Interestingly, scholars have found several advantages of having a diverse and gender-integrated leadership, including higher investment returns (Credit Suisse, 2012); higher return

on equity, sales and invested capital (Catalyst Report, 2007); positive performance outcomes (Menguc & Auh, 2006); improved corporate social responsibility (Boulouta, 2013), and so forth. Awang-Hashim, Noman, and Kaur (2016) borrow from Burkinshaw (2015) to emphasize the need for women in leadership positions and its advantages. They state:

Women's representation in power positions is considered significant for four major reasons: one, for social justice that advocates institutions to be just and treat people with equality; second, for equity and parity that focus on the issue of gender pay and opportunity gap; third, for enhancing the quality of leadership that can be facilitated by diverse practices; and fourth, for economy and business, as organizations with equality and inclusion are looked upon and perceived in a positive light. (Awang-Hashim et al., 2016, pp. 5-6)

Specifically, having women leaders in higher education is significant as they impart knowledge and lead towards the development of future leaders (White House Project, 2009). Hence, the presence of women in leadership roles renders unique experiences for faculty, staff, and students that one may not achieve in a "gender-homogenous leadership" (Awang-Hashim et al., 2016, p. 6). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) further explain that women in academia bring an additional spiritual dimension to their leadership and render valuable insight into both societal and educational issues. They argue that if women take leadership positions actively they in turn participate in fighting the gender discrimination only then will change happen.

Barriers to women leadership. The AAUW report comments on the deficit approach that women are being framed into as if something is holding back women to become leaders. The struggle against these barriers begins with what is commonly called "the glass ceiling" which refers to an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession that especially limits the professional progress of women and members of minorities, but "can also be thought of as a labyrinth" (AAUW, 2016). It is portrayed as if the opportunities for women naturally seem to disappear veiling the explicit discrimination shown in leadership positions recruitment. Some issues AAUW highlights is the consistent pipeline problem, sex discrimination, caregiving and women's choices, lack of effective networks and mentors, and various stereotypes and biases (2016). Scholars argue that gender stereotypes lead to different expectations for men and women both in personal and professional contexts (Bem, 2004; Eagly

& Karau, 2002; Lipps, 2006). Eagly and Karau (2002) elaborate that men are expected to be directive and task-focused, with agency and power for self-promotion, whereas women are more communal, relationship-oriented, and nurturing. In terms of leadership styles, Vinnicombe and Singh (2003) elaborate that women lean towards transformational leadership style and leading from within, whereas male leaders prefer “transactional leadership using situational power to lead from the front” (Percupchik, 2011, p. 36). Such gender stereotypes have been perpetuated for years in all spheres and despite progress in addressing gender disparity, the issues still persist. Nebenzahl (2010) quotes University of Illinois professors Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon to explain that “the biases supporting the glass ceiling are much more subtle, multi-faceted and deeply embedded” (p. 23) than they were in the 1900s. Hence, Percupchik (2011) argues that despite several efforts made to eradicate gender disparity issues very “little progress appears to have been made in changing the culture against women in leadership positions and females in general” (p. 32).

One of the prominent leadership barriers that face women is that it is considered a masculine profession although research demonstrates women and men display similar abilities and competencies in authoritative positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Little, 2007; Schein, 2001). Little (2007) argues that masculine models of leadership are advantageous to men due to the “implicit congruence between masculinity and leadership” (Percupchik, 2011, p. 33). Little (2007) also posits that although women have made their way to middle management, status differences continue to exist, and it seems like the glass ceiling has been moved to a higher level. Hence, Bem (2004) suggests that despite educational institutions not explicitly stating gender discrimination by using gender-neutral practices, “institutions are so thoroughly saturated with androcentrism that even those who do not discriminate against women explicitly must be treated as inherently suspect” (Percupchik, 2011, p. 34).

Vinnicombe and Singh (2003) elaborate on the notion of caregiving and interruptions such as pregnancy, childcare and reduced availability times in women’s careers that act as a barrier to women’s leadership. They explain that there is no evidence of women being less suited for managerial positions than men are, however, the process of career development may be different. Chaudhuri (2009) stressed the “imposter syndrome” that women leaders suffer unlike their male peers. The “imposter syndrome” is a social psychology term describing how

women often feel inferior in their roles and believe that they do not deserve success. Women generally do not boast their accomplishments and this in turn affects their confidence (Chaudhuri, 2009). Moreover, when women succeed to leadership positions, they face several pressures that usually men do not face such as they are exposed to riskier jobs than men do. For instance, one of the leaders commented, “Women have told us that if they succeed, they are given another risky position. They become known as firefighters. Of course, men do have to take on difficult positions as well, but when women get senior positions, the odds of it being a risky one are higher” (Levenson, 2007, para 7). These pressures create an instinct among women leaders to accept risky jobs in order to prove themselves good enough (Levenson, 2007). Concerning pay, Bagnall (2009) argues that globally there is a pro-male and anti-female agenda. This gender inequality also extends to promotions and the number of leadership positions.

Women in Educational Leadership. It is obvious to think that since a majority of women is in the field of education as teachers, professors and staff, women might also share a good portion of leadership positions. In contrast, the AAUW study explains that despite this fact, women at superintendent positions is much lower than men (AAUW, 2016). Finnan, McCord, Stream, Petersen, & Ellerson (2015) elaborate that where 18 percent of superintendents were White women, only 1 percent were black women, and women from all other races constituted about 1 percent. This is further continued in the field of higher education despite women’s extensive graduate education. Women are underrepresented as tenured and full professors, and this in turn limits their prospects to excel in leadership positions in higher education institutions. Hence, men outnumber women as deans, provosts, and presidents (Hammond, 2015). Oguntoyinbo (2014) further argue that women of color are comparatively limited in administrative positions and that Black women have historically served as faculty and administrators in black colleges and universities but are not seen in predominantly white institutions.

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) reiterate the same barriers that women face even in higher education. They argue “women continue to report working and studying in climates that privilege masculine perspectives and approaches to organizing and leading that tend to disadvantage women” (Allan, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, Maher and Thompson-Tetreault (2011) confirmed that “Academic women are consistently and globally

reporting discrimination and male privilege in knowledge constructs, professional development, and management. Sometimes discrimination is overt and easily identifiable. Other times, it is abstract, nebulous, and difficult to read and contest” (p. 283). Hence, these biases are embedded in the workplace culture and systems, argue Ely et al. (2001). The higher education stream seems more oppressive than the corporate world for women in terms of leadership (Samble, 2008), especially due to the lack of training and infrastructure support for leaders (Thomas et al. 2004). The barriers reported by leaders in higher education are of two types: structural and sociocultural (Geary, 2016). Structural barriers are at an institutional level such as wages (Thomas et al., 2004), tenure and promotion (Mason et al., 2013), service (Misra, 2011), teaching (Williams, 2004), and research requirements (Sax et al., 2002) discriminatory for women through policies and regulation. Sociocultural barriers are those that highlight caregiving responsibilities (Mason & Goulden, 2002), extra responsibilities other than teaching and research for women (Mullen, 2009), challenges to networking (Airini et al., 2011), mentoring (Mason & Gouldon, 2002) and leadership development (Geary, 2016). These barriers get even more complicated for women of color (Geary, 2016) and their presence in leadership is far lower. Turner et al. (2011) rightly identified the tension women of color leaders’ face when they are promoted to higher ranks. They are:

more visible and on display, feeling more pressure to conform, needing to make fewer mistakes, finding it harder to gain credibility, being more isolated and peripheral, having fewer opportunities to be sponsored, facing misconceptions about their identity and role in the organization, being stereotyped, and facing more stress. (2008, p. 200)

In addition to the structural and sociocultural barriers that all women face, women of color also face racial issues. Their “assumptions of intellectual and professional competency” is questioned and “superiority automatically assigned to White men and women” (Turner et al., 2011, p. 203).

Ways to address gender disparity. Diversity training programs have had both positive and negative impact on addressing gender disparity. On one hand they have shown promising results where faculty who engage in such training reflect and self-monitor issues concerning gender-equity (Carnes et al., 2015) but on the other they perpetuate racial and gender stereotypes (Williams et al., 2014). Geary (2016) advocates for formal mentorship programs to motivate and train women to better gain leadership roles in higher education system enhancing their

understanding of the system. Anderson et al. (2015) identified structured free recall, source monitoring, and error management as effective bias reducing strategies against women in leadership roles. Structured free recall considers the positive and negative aspects of an individual so that generalizations can be avoided, whereas source monitoring is where actual membered judgments are taken into consideration rather than gut feelings (AAUW, 2016). Finally, in order to carry out error management, individuals reflect on their own errors and self-regulate. (Anderson et al., 2015). Additionally, the AAUW stresses testing on implicit biases in order to effectively counteract them. Harvard University's Implicit Bias Project developed these tests and are available free on their website that helps assess many "stereotypes, including gender, race, and ethnicity" (AAUW, 2016). Likewise, gender quotas have helped a great deal to overcome gender disparity. However, Heilman et al. (1987) also highlight that women employed through this quota system may face stereotypical issues that they are less qualified, hence crashing their self-esteem. Moreover, reforms in employment and recruitment policies have also shown drastic improvement in gender disparity. Lennon et al. (2013) suggest that using gender-neutral language for job description has a positive impact to bridge gender leadership gap. AAUW extend their study and explain how exposure to a variety of role models in leadership positions, is a powerful way to demystify the stereotype of leadership to masculinity. Further, Asgari et al. (2012) argue that being exposed to successful female leaders as role models have shown to motivate women's self-confidence in taking up leadership positions in future. Awang-hashim et al. (2016) propose extensive research to eliminate the issue of gender inequality globally by women development institutes and scholars advocating for gender equality and inclusion in all spheres. Capacity building in terms of providing effective training and mentoring is also a great means to overcome gender disparity, says Awang-Hashim et al. (2016).

Ultimately, the AAUW (2016) suggests many recommendations at various levels to implement in order to address gender disparity. First at the individual level, the AAUW suggests students to seek evidence-based leadership training, study leadership courses, explore one's biases, understand stereotype threat, set leadership goals, be prepared for potential career interruptions and plan ahead, and find ways to promote women's leadership (2016, pp. 35-37). Second at the employers' level, the AAUW recommends that employers must focus more on productivity rather than having fixed schedules and timings for employees, offer evidence-based diversity training, encourage sponsorship programs, and design human resource materials to

eliminate various biases in their work place (AAUW, 2016, pp. 37-38). Finally, for policy makers, find ways to tackle persistent sex discrimination, strengthen equal pay laws, increase in salary transparency, laws to embrace woman hood such as pregnancy leave, fully enforce Title IX and offer support educational programs for women seeking high-wage jobs (AAUW, 2016, pp. 38-39).

Women and Leadership in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries. The Gulf Cooperation Council comprises of six states- Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). McKinsey and company (a consulting firm) in their work on *GCC Women in Leadership* (2014) argue that although we have witnessed many women in leadership positions in the GCC countries, either they are the first one to the position or the only one still holding the position. The report studies the significance of women in leadership positions and ways it enhances organizational effectiveness. It also describes the status of women in leadership in the GCC region, stresses the significance of gender diversity in the GCC, and suggests ways as to how a senior management team can empower and promote female work force participation as well as female leadership. Therefore, McKinsey and company suggest that rather than having the first female leader to be seen as an exception, it is essential to pave the way to make female leadership a norm. They argue that organizations with three or more women in senior leadership positions enhances organizational effectiveness across all nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness: culture and climate, direction, coordination and control, leadership, external orientation, motivation, capability, accountability, and innovation and learning. Furthermore, men and women both agree that female leaders do play a significant role in improving the organizational effectiveness because of three core mechanisms; mix of leadership strengths, many diverse perspectives can be captured, and there is a correlation between the improvements in team dynamics with more diversity in team members.

Despite many women reaching aspiring positions in leadership positions, McKinsey and company (2014) emphasize that GCC women are still under represented. Moreover, the “GCC Board of Directors Institute (BDI) research indicates that GCC women currently hold less than 1% of executive committee and board positions” (p. 16). McKinsey and company (2014) also emphasize that the women’s participation in leadership will in turn add to the national labor participation statistics and help increase the share of nationals in the overall workforce. It shows that the expatriate population has grown rapidly in the GCC states, especially in Qatar and UAE

reaching more than 80% of the total population. Therefore, it has become critical for the government to increase both public and private sector participation for their nationals. Hence, the Qatarization policy as implemented by the leadership of Qatar effectively contributes to increasing the national workforce.

Considering the current context for women leaders in the GCC, it is noted that despite these significant progresses that the GCC countries have made especially in the female education rates and levels, still the participation of women in the work force remains low especially in senior management positions. Research on the gender gap in unemployment within GCC states provides further insight into the problem: McKinsey and company (2014) indicate that in OECD and European countries the unemployment rates of men and women are 10% and 11% respectively. Whereas, in the GCC countries women's unemployment rate is 15% and men's is 3%. In other words, women face a higher unemployment rate in GCC countries than in OECD and European countries and the employment gap between women and men is higher in GCC, however, these percentages also include the expatriates⁸ (McKinsey & Company, 2014). While Mc. Kinsey and company's report does not give a breakdown of Qatari nationals versus expatriates, the labor force survey by Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics clarify that nearly two-thirds of expatriate women work in GCC compared to one-third of Qatari women (MDPS, 2015). Although GCC governments have taken several remarkable steps to empower female leaders and increase their participation in the labor force, barriers still exist. Particularly in Saudi Arabia where the government requires the organizations recruiting women to facilitate gender-segregated work areas, eating space and so forth for women and this in turn acts as a disincentive barrier to hire women (McKinsey & Company, 2014).

McKinsey and company's scholars explain four core challenges for GCC women in leadership:

1. Family and social expectations of women resulting in the double0burden syndrome (enhanced by corporations' "anytime, anywhere" performance model)
2. Biases regarding women in leadership (displayed by both men and women)
3. Infrastructure gaps such as transportation and not yet fully developed HR functions with supporting policies for women in leadership

⁸ Expatriates are non-GCC people who live in the GCC countries.

4. Limited networking opportunities and lack of targeted leadership programs.

(McKinsey & Company, 2014, p. 18)

Finally, McKinsey and company's team suggest several recommendations for the furthering of women in leadership positions in the GCC. First, there needs to be a strong commitment from top management towards increasing gender diversity in any organization. Second, the government and top management can design targeted work leadership programs as well as support high-potential leadership find their career path in an efficient manner. Third, simultaneous efforts ought to be initiated in eradicating the gender biases. Finally, there needs to be supporting HR policies and suitable infrastructure that gives a strong foundation for gender diversity to flourish.

Summary

In order to understand the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar in higher education in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice, I undertook a full study of scholarship on the economic, political and educational context of Qatar, an introduction to scholarship on Islamic leadership theory and educational leadership, and an introduction to the economic and leadership status of women in Qatar. Each section presents a relevant body of literature to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. However, the section on education system and reform in Qatar mostly focused on K-12 education system given the abundant research focus on this education level in Qatar. Simultaneously, this review of literature also pointed out the dearth of information on higher education research and research on women and leadership in Qatar. Ultimately, a goal of this study is to make connections between these bodies of literature to gain a fuller understanding of the experiences of female Qatari leaders in the field of higher education in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology of the Study

Given the contextual and theoretical understandings of the topic, what is the best way to understand the experiences of women in leadership positions in higher education in Qatar? This study explores female leadership experiences in higher education settings in Qatar. Specifically, this research focuses on women's narratives about their leadership approaches concerning Islamic leadership theory and practices. The central question guiding this study is as follows: How do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education? In this section, I discuss my methodological approach to the study. I also address my positionality as a researcher and ways I maneuver through the challenges I overcame during participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis.

To illuminate female leaders' experiences in Qatar and specifically to address, *how do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education*, this study employs interpretivist discourse of research (Benton & Craib, 2010). As Quantz (2015) asserts, interpretivists seek to “*understand how others make meaning of their world with a further assumption that people construct their own worlds in some way*” (emphasis in original). Interpretive discourse complements my present inquiry by prioritizing female leaders' narratives about the meaning of leadership roles in an Islamic context.

For this study, I rely on Clandinin and Connelly's *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) that explains narrative as a way of “understanding experience” through the telling of stories (p.20). Narrative is explained and presented in different ways in qualitative research. According to Quantz and Talbert (2015), a narrative is a story that has a structure, plot, themes, and characters. Riessman further adds depth to this conception and remarks that the term narrative in human sciences is three-fold. First, interpretive stories as told by research participants; second, stories developed by the researcher based on interviews and other sources; third, a narrative that readers construct after reading the written narrative by the researcher (2008, p. 6). Narrative, then, as I use in this study, allows for a “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). To be clear, the object of study is the narratives female leaders use to share their leadership experiences and not the experiences of the leaders themselves. I am more interested in what the leaders *say*, or how they *interpret* or make meaning of their own experience than I am in their actual experiences from some “objective” or outsider lens.

Method: Narrative Inquiry

This qualitative study employs narrative research methods. It is important to note that the ontology/object of the study is also narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posit: “narrative is both the phenomenon and method of the social sciences” (p. 18). Narrative inquiry is addressed as a “phenomenon” with regards to the methodology exploring the lived experiences of leaders, responding to the “what” of the research purpose, whereas as a “method” narrative inquiry answers the “how” of this specific research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 125-127).

The ontological analysis of narrative inquiry stems from John Dewey’s theory of experience. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Dewey’s theory of “experience” has three main tenets. First, that experience is basically transactional and not transcendental. Biesta and Burbules (2003) explain Dewey’s transactional realism as an experience that is active and dynamic that happens as a result of transaction between mind and matter (i.e., environment). Bolyard (2016) clarifies this further by explaining that “how people come to make meaning of things depends on their experiences with those things, or the place at which they enter the transaction with their environment” (p. 48).

Second, Dewey stresses the concept of “continuity.” Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remark that experiences lead to several other experiences that connect the present, past, and the future. Moreover, it is imperative to understand that experiences are not just connected through time, but they are continuous by reflecting on the past experiences in light of the present experience and reconstructing their experiences. Third, the tenet that most aptly suited my narrative inquiry is the focus on social dimension and the understanding that subjects make of these social influences both in personal and community life.

It is necessary to clarify the difference between experience and narrative at this point. For Dewey, experience happens only when we make it meaningful irrespective of when the events actually occurred. Experience occurs only when we think about what we are experiencing. Therefore, drawing from Dewey, “experience” as per Clandinin and Connelly occurs only when leaders narrate their stories. These reflections on narratives creates an opportunity to think back of their experiences and give meaning to their leadership experiences.

Dewey’s theory of experience and pragmatism helps me justify the knowledge claims within this narrative inquiry. Quantz (2015) argues that for pragmatists “knowledge results from the unification of thought and materiality” calling this as “praxis” through the researcher’s

experience (p. 10). Praxis is defined as “the process in which the individual’s own meaning making arises as the result of the “career” which includes the past, present, and future experiences” (Quantz, 2015, p. 10). This complements Clandinin and Connelly’s narrative inquiry object of connecting the past, present and the future (2000).

Comparing the interpretivist philosophy with that of the positivist philosophy, Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) argue that the main difference between the two is that the former begins with the ontological commitments and then treats epistemological commitments whereas the latter is the vice versa (p. 43). Further, they emphasize that in narrative inquiry and with the notion of experience the reality can be envisioned as “relational, temporal, and continuous, ” analyzed and presented in a narrative form, “not just in retrospective representations of human experience but also in the lived immediacy of that experience” (p. 43). Narrative inquirers claim knowledge within the human experiences and their lived and told stories, whereas, positivists claim knowledge outside the human experiences. For positivists, fluidity in research is seen as a drawback whereas in narrative inquiry it is not seen as a methodological problem but rather a “purpose of the research” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006, p. 45). Furthermore, narrative inquirers enter the field with the “sense of uncertainty” and “tentativeness” aiming to present their participants’ lived human experience and their way of meaning making. In Clandinin and Rosiek’s words, “the challenge for narrative inquirer, therefore, is less of achieving the highest possible grade of epistemic clarity and is instead how to integrate ethical and epistemic concerns – how to put knowledge in the service of enhancing human experience” (2006, p. 46). Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) also present their arguments comparing narrative inquiry with Marxism and critical theory and post-structuralism as well, however for this research, I address the distinction between positivist and narrative knowledge claims as it fulfills the needs to explain the epistemological claims for my study.

Therefore, to interpret the leader’s narratives and to make meaning of them, a Deweyan pragmatic ontology helped me reject the “objective/subjective dualism” (Bolyard, 2016, p. 49) which views knowledge as located either in the world or in the mind and never consider it as a transaction between the two (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). This helped me represent leaders’ stories in an Islamic context (environment) by not just solely considering their narration of stories from the leaders’ minds but also by considering how these stories took shape in the world they live in.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "...experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of [studying] narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19). Based on this argument, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also believe that humans are "storytelling organisms" (p. 2) who are "living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71). Because educational experiences are also narratives, it is appropriate to study educational experiences narratively.

Creswell (2013) elaborates that narrative as a method emphasizes the experiences of individuals as told by the participants from their "lived" and "told" stories (p. 70). Leavy (2008) also adds that narrative methods help the researcher and the participant work collaboratively to explore their [participants] lived stories and unravel "multidimensional meanings" from the data (p. 27) making the narrative inquiry process complex. Moreover, since the researcher and the participant work collaboratively to construct these stories by telling and retelling, the process gets even more complicated. Furthermore, Kim (2016) clarifies that narratives help organize human experiences of leadership and so can be studied to help illuminate leadership practices for further reflection.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) reflection on narrative inquiry life at the boundaries presents five tensions associated with this method. First, in terms of "temporality" by considering any event having a past, present, and an implied future; second, "people" who ought to be considered as involved in a "process" and be able to "narrate the person in terms of process"; third, "action" is to be seen as a narrative sign before interpreting it as told by the participant; fourth, level of "certainty" is seen as a tension in narrative inquiry as the stories told do have a level of uncertainty; fifth, "context" as it is always present that in turn helps give meaning to the people and the event.

To work through these tensions and reflect on complexities associated with narrative inquiry, I incorporated Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that stems from Dewey's theory of experience (2000, p. 50) as they argue that

any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

Narrative Inquiry in this Study

With narrative as the object of my study, I listened to the narratives of female educational leaders in Qatar when discussing their leadership roles. The core of this narrative inquiry is to listen to the narratives and experiences of the researcher and the participants in a particular place, at a given particular time, and that which is ongoing and transactional. This qualitative study also incorporates different mediums of data collection. In addition to the one-on-one conversations, I also collected data through observations of their work in their work place that helped me add more depth to their leadership stories by prompting “story starters” and follow-up interview questions to understand female leaders’ experiences.

Participants. Since narrative inquiry “focuses on deep explorations of a small number of cases in a particular context” (Bold, 2012, p. 57), I chose a sample size of three female leaders in higher education for this study. Bold (2012) argues that the idea of generalizing the information is not the focus of qualitative research; rather it is the “transformation of the practice in a specific context” (p. 57). I used convenience sampling to seek female leaders who were in a higher education setting with a minimum of 3-5 years of leadership experience. Here, I would like to clarify how I define higher education. Female leaders who are currently in any university or college settings as well as in any research organizations were considered as a part of higher education. There are two reasons for this justification. First, I wanted to analyze stories from educational settings other than K-12 school settings since K-12 is gender segregated with only female settings, whereas university and research organizations are gender mixed work places. Second, these narratives gave me a variety of leadership experiences by defining higher education both from research and university/college settings. Furthermore, any female leaders from the field of K-12 education settings were excluded from my research. To identify participants, I networked with professors in the national university in Qatar from where I graduated with Master’s degree to connect me with leaders who might be interested in participating in this study. After contacting several leaders, I found three participants, and I shared with them the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter via email. In order to avail their consent to participate in this study, I met with each of these participants to explain the purpose of my research study. This informal meeting provided an avenue to build rapport with my participants as well as collect some demographic information about my participants, choose a pseudonym based on participants’ preference, detail the ethical considerations, and discuss

mutual expectations with regards to interviews and observations in this narrative inquiry. After detailing these specifics, I provided them with an informed consent to read and sign. Finally, this meeting also helped me schedule my interviews and observations with a goal of a minimum of 2-3 official meetings to observe with participants consent.

One leader is the Director of Research in an independent organization who also serves as an Assistant Professor in a University in Qatar. Another leader is the Department Chair in one of the colleges in a University in Qatar. The third participant is again the Head of Research in a government organization that encourages scholars both in higher education and K-12 setting to engage in research for overall national development and transform to a knowledge-based economy. These leaders willingly agreed to share their leadership stories; however, they were a little hesitant on scheduling for observations. They believed they would have to seek their superiors' permission to give consent for observations. Nevertheless, they assured that they would find a way to share their experiences during a meeting. For one leader observations were carried out without any hurdles, but for two leaders it was problematic, since they did not feel comfortable seeking their superior's consent. Therefore, my alternative plan was to ask, in the interviews, for participants to share the way meetings are held in their institution (see Appendix-A).

Data Collection. As Creswell (2013) highlights, there are several ways to collect data for a narrative research: interviews, documents and archival materials, subject journaling, participant observation, and casual chatting; I drew from Riessman (2008), heavily focusing on interviews/conversations as a major source of data collection. Riessman emphasizes interviews as “narrative occasions” (2008, p. 23), that helped me construct detailed stories of the participants lived experiences. This was supplemented with participant observation and personal reflection notes to juggle through multiple subjectivities that I bring in as a researcher as well as a shared storyteller.

Clandinin and Connelly posit that it is imperative in narrative inquiry to listen to participants' stories, further adding that “the narrative inquirer may note stories but more often records action, doings and happenings, all of which are narrative expressions” (2000, p. 79). Listening is a key trait for narrative inquirers as Creswell (2013) and Leavy (2008) emphasize what they call as “biographical study” in which “the researcher writes and records the

experiences of another person's life" (Creswell, 2013, p. 72). I conducted three rounds of interviews with each participant, totaling nine interviews that were voice recorded. An interview protocol designed for conducting these interviews typically called interviews as conversations by narrative inquirers at the participants' working site. These conversations were guided with some core questions and follow up questions to maintain the focus of the research but at the same time also maintain flexibility that empowered participants to ask further clarifying questions if needed (Bold, 2012).

In addition to interviews, observations also served as a means of data collection for my study. However, because of potential complications in conducting observations, I sought an alternative plan of asking participants to describe their work place and nature of meetings they lead. Ideally, I conducted three "non-participant observations" for one leader and adapted the backup plan of asking in-depth questions about meetings to fill in the gaps for two leaders. Given some of the social and political restrictions facing leaders in higher education, including such issues as confidential personnel and student discussions, nonparticipant" observations were appropriate to record the activities of female leaders in their leadership role when compared to that of the "participant as observer" method (Creswell, 2013; Bold, 2012). Three observations were scheduled based upon the participants' consent that ranged between one to two hours. Field notes as an observational log was maintained to record the leadership activity going on and simultaneously reflecting on my research bias to observe only what is needed and nothing else (Glense, 2011). These observations yielded to follow up questions and story starters for the interviews as well as helped construct participants' lived experiences supplementing my qualitative study.

As Creswell (2013) stresses that many researchers fail to address the issue of data storage, I would like to clarify that the interview and observation data was stored securely in password protected data folders on my laptop. The audio recordings were transferred to a secured folder. Additionally, my password protected personal laptop was used to record conversations simultaneously for a backup on the Microsoft one-note application that enabled me to take notes as well as record at the same time. After each interview, data was transferred from my voice recorder and stored in a computer file on a password-protected laptop. Furthermore, the anonymity of the participants was prioritized with data storage, field notes, and transcripts using pseudonyms for leaders and their institutions.

Data Analysis. As Bold (2012) argues that there is no single way to analyze data in a narrative inquiry as a qualitative research, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose their three-dimensional inquiry space to begin with the analysis of narrative inquiry, whereas Riessman (2008) lays out several ways: thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, and visual analysis. For the purpose of this leadership narrative inquiry, I adopted a thematic analysis approach that helped me develop their stories (Riessman, 2008; Bold, 2012). In Bold's words, "thematic experience analysis encompasses two ideas that the researcher is often seeking and identifying themes (or not) within the narratives; and that experiences usually involve relationships between people and contexts" (2012, p. 129). This type of analysis reiterates Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) temporality, space, and the personal and social components. I interpreted how these participants narrated their experiences as leaders in a biographical manner.

I transcribed and examined the narrative data for codes to further categorize into themes and explore their leadership experiences that helped develop their individual case studies. Preliminary coding followed by a secondary set of coding amalgamated the themes from which grand themes emerged. According to Bold (2012), though there are several software packages such as NUD*IST and NVivo for qualitative data analysis, these are equally time consuming as they just assist with the "practicalities of sorting and classifying the data" (p. 130). Therefore, the data analysis was done manually by coding and categorizing into themes.

Further, I present these narratives as individual case studies to reveal their lived stories. Cases were further analyzed for overlapping themes, any variations, leading to a cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995). The cross-case analysis was established by analyzing individual leadership stories under the framework of Padela's Islamic educational leadership model (2015). It should be noted that these thematic categories and coding helped interpret the story as a whole in contrast to that of the grounded theory. "Prior theory guided inquiry" is evident in narrative inquiry with further exploration of "theoretical insights from the data" (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Riessman (2008) goes on to say that thematic analysis in narrative inquiry "keep[s] the 'story' intact for interpretive purposes, although determining the boundaries of stories can be difficult and highly interpretive" (p. 74). To acknowledge the reflexivity and bias in qualitative research especially narrative inquiry, during this "restorying" process, I assured that the participants'

stories are not influenced by my stories/words since qualitative research in general is heavily interpretive (Creswell, 2013), analyzing each narrative cautiously in the context of Qatar.

Ethical Considerations. Bold (2012) identifies several ethical questions that a researcher ought to address with regards to a narrative research. She cites Campbell and Groundwater-Smith (2007) highlighting ethical issues to be addressed as, “acknowledging your ‘own’ position in the research; access to contexts and proposed participants; gaining informed consent; storing data; reporting outcomes” (as cited in Bold, 2012, p. 51). In addition to the Miami University’s IRB approval that addressed several general ethical issues to a qualitative research such as obtaining informed consent from the participants, assuring participants their right to withdraw from research at any time, and reducing the risks associated with this research (Creswell, 2013), I assured that the anonymity of the participants will be maintained throughout the research by using participant preferred pseudonym. The benefits such as filling the literature gap, reflection and recommendations to improve the leadership training programs in Qatar based on these leadership narratives, and this research’s contribution towards motivating female leaders to contribute to Qatar’s workforce will hopefully outweigh the potential risks associated with this research.

Moreover, according to Bold (2012) addressing the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and finally the social purposes with regards to my research laid out several ethical ways I can approach the issues related to narrative inquiry. Believing that people walk in with their own ways to perceive things, understand that knowledge exists in many forms, having a commitment to promoting equality, I explicitly acknowledge the values I bring in as a researcher. Further, a reflexive dialogue will be used to “co-construct meaning” of the leaders’ lived experiences (Bold, 2012, p. 61). Clearly stating my position as less of a researcher-subject relationship, but rather mutually carry out the storying and restorying process to construct the narratives is the goal in order to build rapport with participants and minimize bias in this research.

Bold (2012) calls narrative research as “intrusive”, therefore the ethical challenges overflow and the aim is to balance “their perspective of a person’s narrative with the person’s own view” (p. 57). Riesmann (2008, p. 198) responds to this concern arguing that “life stories are not static; memories and meanings of experiences change as time passes”, and it is not always practical to assume that all participants will agree to our restorying perspectives. So, in

this study I made sure to make the closest interpretation of their lives and clearly keep my views and participant's view distinct. Further, to add more credibility to these stories, I shared drafts of leadership narratives with research participants seeking their feedback. This in turn, reiterated their stories in a meaningful manner and expressed their consent confirming my interpretation of their stories. Concerning non-participant observations, my preliminary meeting with my research participants revealed their consent for one-one interviews. One research participant willingly agreed for observations, however, two participants hesitated to permit me to observe their leadership practices in work place. They justified stating that their meetings usually involve senior management people and it would be difficult to seek their consent for these observations. To overcome this challenge ethically in data collection, I incorporated a question in my interview for participants to share the way meetings were held in their institution.

Voice, power, and trustworthiness. Riessman (2008) states that by giving voice and encouraging participants to narrate their stories in their own way starting with an inducing question shifts the power in narrative inquiry, specifically interviews. Although we cannot eliminate these power issues, however, keeping these issues to the minimum by providing clarity prompts, and being a good listener was my approach to give voice to the participants. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), there is also a need to address the “multiplicity of voices” for both the researchers and the participants reflecting on the “voices heard and the voices not heard” (p. 147). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) further call this multiplicity of voices as “multiple I’s” and it is imperative for a researcher to “sort out whose voice is the dominant one when we write ‘I’” (p. 9). Therefore, constantly reflecting on these issues in all phases such as data collection, data analysis and finally restorying leaders’ narratives helped keep the various voices separate and empowered both the researcher and the participant.

“Narrative research is relational research” (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 599), hence, building rapport and maintaining relations with participants was a key goal to illuminate leaders’ narratives. Treating participants as people unlike as subjects opened up more detailed conversations about the research and in some instances, it may even deviate from the purpose, however, being a keen listener helped in building rapport with the participants. Interviews began with informal greetings and conversations and for observations, although I aimed to be nonparticipant observer when I was approached for some assistance or feedback I was glad to participate. However, I was cautious not to interrupt participants’ working routines by making

sure to grasp the events and record my queries if any were to be clarified at a later time. Furthermore, I view myself as a *learner* of leadership stories and maintained that stance by being a keen listener of their experiences and not spending inordinate time sharing my opinion and feedback. I shared my analysis and writing with these leaders for credibility and solicited their feedback for the closest restorying of their lived experiences.

Credibility. Drawing from Creswell (2013, p. 246), I followed Eisner's (1998) "credibility" of qualitative research rather than using the term validity. The three standards for qualitative inquiry: structural corroboration, consensual validity, and referential adequacy were achieved by multiple ways. First, I pursued structural corroboration similar to triangulation (Creswell, 2013), by looking for repeating events or behaviors also called as "typifications" (Eisner, 1998, p.110). Second, consensual validation was achieved by seeking participants' feedback on their written narratives. Third, in order to achieve referential adequacy, the leaders' narratives were understood in higher educational context in Qatar as well as thought of in a broader context of policy field, K-12 field as well as in the context of GCC.

In addition to the above-mentioned ways to ensure credibility of my narratives, I also followed Riessman's (2008) advice that "verifying facts was less important than understanding their meanings for individuals and groups" (Reissman, 2008, p. 187) to construct meaningful stories of the female leaders in Qatar. Riessman (2008) further argues that there is no fixed method to assess the reliability, validity, and ethics of the research especially for narrative research, whereas it is "following a methodical path, documenting claims, and practicing reflexivity strengthens the case for validity" (Reissman, 2008, p. 193).

Strengths. Indeed, there are several strengths associated with this qualitative narrative inquiry project. First, while the findings from this study cannot be generalized to all female leaders in higher education field in Qatar or nearby GCC countries with regards to their Islamic leadership practices, it does create an opportunity for the readers to think and re-think their own lived experiences and make meaning of one's own experiences. Second, the researcher serves as a filter to illuminate female leaders' stories when making meaning of the Islamic leadership practice in higher education in Qatar. As Creswell proposes, "the researcher writes persuasively so that the reader experiences 'being there'" (2013, p. 54). Third, unveiling the Islamic leadership practices and ways female leaders maneuver cultural/religious challenges in the field

of higher education and their leadership roles may contribute to future analysis by researchers and readers. The findings of the study may be useful in suggesting professional development for school leaders that incorporates both their own experiences about the reform and their own understandings of Islamic leadership. This research would add to the national conversation and incorporate such discussions critically during their leadership training. Finally, an added strength is empowering female leaders through their stories.

Limitations. While there are strengths with this research design, there are also some limitations that I had to keep in mind and constantly juggle through to minimize them. According to Quantz (2015), interpretive discourses are neither purely empirical nor normative and the goal is to understand “the way in which particular people [leaders] create meaning in the world... we should do all we can to reconstruct the meaning of those being studies rather than alter the meaning to fit our own biases” (p. 16). Therefore, continuously confronting and monitoring my biases as a researcher was one of the limitation of this research, although practicing reflexivity constantly, eliminating all bias is impossible. Furthermore, Alan Peshkin (1988) argues that reflexivity is a complex process and goes far beyond just identifying one’s own subjectivities to the interrogation of one’s subjective I’s. Therefore, I practiced “subjectivity audit” as Peshkin (1988, p. 18) calls for in order for confronting my biases and feelings throughout this research by taking notes and documenting my reactions. This auditing enabled me to perceive the stories in the best possible way as the narrators portray and consciously reflect that “what is see” is “what I make of what I see” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 21).

Stories Within a Story: A Researcher’s Challenge

Maneuvering my way through participant recruitment. My research sampling started with A’isha (a female leader) as a convenient sample, and then took shape of a snowball sampling technique. A’isha is a friend of mine, though very recently we met in an educational conference in the year 2015. A’isha helped me in the initial phase of research participants’ recruitment. It was early September 2016, I began to recruit my research participants. This decision was based on the reflection and advice from my supervisor at one of the universities in Qatar, reminding me of the difficulty in recruiting participants especially for a qualitative narrative study that involved in-depth interview data to develop thick descriptive stories. A’isha, a Qatari female leader, who is aware of the leadership and the cultural context, further confirmed

this challenge due to the time involved in interviewing for a qualitative research. Therefore, as A'isha suggested I sent my research participant recruitment letter to A'isha and then she emailed to five female leaders who were her friends. Some of them replied back to confirm their availability to set up an introductory meeting time, while some straightaway apologized for their unavailability due to tight schedules.

One female leader, Khadija invited me for introductory meeting to her office. It was Sunday, the first working day in Qatar, Khadija was available at noon to meet with me. I arrive her office well before time. There was a huge waiting area, lobby. Khadija served as a Head of two interconnected departments. There were three receptionists with their spacious working area next to the lobby. I approached one of them and he greeted me with Islamic greetings. He called Khadija from his desk phone and informed about my presence. As I was waiting, I heard these receptionists, all males, working busily and answering several phone calls simultaneously. It was two minutes after 12 noon, I was asked to go to Khadija's room. There was a small door from the reception area that took me to her office. Khadija, welcomed me with greetings, and walked away from her desk to a huge meeting table. The room was neatly organized with a cupboard in one corner of the room. There were many windows that lit that room naturally. Grabbing our seats and after my initial introduction, I offered Khadija my research recruitment letter and consent letter. Khadija asked several clarification questions and I explained my research and responded to her critical questions. One such question was the critique of associating religion to leadership. She also claimed that Qatar gives equal opportunities for males and females and so on. I presented my research argument in the best possible way emphasizing that Qatar being an Islamic nation, using Islamic Sharia law tries to incorporate Islamic values in most spheres, especially in the field of education. My clarification and significance of my study continued as that the leadership development opportunities does not include or reflect on the best practices of Islam and Islamic leadership itself rather draw from the Western leadership theories and practices. Khadija politely disagreed to participate in my research study stating her schedule is too busy to accommodate my interviews and observations.

My first "subjectivity audit", as Peshkin (1988, p. 18) calls, read like this:

Although, our conversation was friendly, I could sense a step back, may be because religion and their perspectives on Qatar as a context was involved in my study. But also,

maybe I perceived things incorrectly, however, as a resident of Qatar for more than 6 years, having worked in this culture, I could feel talking about religion and weaving it within work atmosphere was a challenge. (Field notes, September 2016)

This reflective field note gave me an opportunity to reflect on the significance of my research critically as well as a firsthand experience of challenges in recruiting research participants.

My search for participants continued rigorously as only one participant; that is A'isha was willing to participate in my study. I then approached one of university that I worked as a Graduate Assistant. I was hoping some leaders might be interested to participate in this study. The leader I approached, Aamina was in a sabbatical leave and was not in any leadership role; hence not fitting into my sampling criteria. However, her desire to help me did not subside. We contacted via phone and she explained that very rarely she visits the campus. Finally, Aamina gave me a date and time that she will visit the University. About noon, on a Monday, I went to Aamina's office. Not finding her in her office, I stepped out to visit my old friends. On my way, I see Aamina, cheerful and crowded by many of her colleagues greeting and hugging her and conversing with her in the corridor. I could sense, how long Aamina had been away from office. Not wanting to miss Aamina and in a dilemma whether or not to interrupt their conversations, I followed her as she moved farther away from her office in different directions meeting with other colleagues. As she was passing, I greeted Aamina, and she quickly realized the time and her appointment tried to move away from meeting colleagues and leading to her office. I was surprised to see her new office. A room with a small table and chair, small couch for visitors. After listening to my research needs, she suggested that I send her my recruitment letter and she would connect me to her friends. Since, Aamina had been in a leadership position for more than a decade or so, I was sure she had many contacts of female leaders. The same process as A'isha did was repeated. It was approximately 10-12 leaders that she suggested, most of them that A'isha had also spoken about. Therefore, there were finally around 7 leaders she emailed to and I heard back from three leaders, of which two of them, unfortunately denied to participate due to time constraints.

The third female leader, Farha invited me to meet with her; by then, it was late September. Off to my recruitment task, I grab my bags, compile a new set of documents: recruitment and consent letter, IRB approval along with the Higher Education Institute approval

to Farha's office. It was a long way to walk from the car parking area, at 11 in the morning, heat was at its peak. The secretary greeted me and told me to wait in a well-furnished dainty lobby by the time she informs Farha about my presence. Reflecting on the challenges to recruit participants for my research, I sit back hoping and praying that she agrees to participate. After a few minutes of wait, I was called in.

It was a huge room, with a big table at the straight end of the room. Behind was a cupboard displaying artifacts of their department's accomplishments. To my right was a meeting table with comfortable seating arrangement and to my left a cupboard holding some files and documents. Farha, busily working in her seat greeted me and gave me time to explain my research. I grabbed this opportunity and explained her. As I was talking, Farha was continuously signing some documents. Unfortunately, Farha was also stuck with time constraints and she concluded our meeting with one simple statement: "I don't have 3 hours of time for my life itself" (Field notes, September, 2016). This statement was so blunt and left a remark on me about how busy a leader's life is. She had initially assumed that I might have a leadership survey for her that she could instantly complete and hand it back. My reflective diary was left with just one statement that Farha told, and with some graffiti of disappointment.

After a few days, recovering from disappointment and seeking new ways to find potential research participants, I hear back from a leader who had denied initially suggesting another leader's name, an Assistant Professor: Deena⁹. Promptly, I wrote to back to Deena, and she willingly agreed to participate in my study. My introductory meeting was great with Deena and we scheduled our next meetings and exchanged contact numbers for ease in communication. Deena's friendly gestures motivated and energized me to focus on seeking more participants. My field notes marked Deena as the second participant willing to contribute to my research after A'isha (October, 2016).

Reflecting on the purpose of my research seeking to understand female leadership narratives in higher education in Qatar, the number of research participants was not the biggest concern, nevertheless, how in-depth these leaders share their experiences was a priority.

⁹ Deena's case study will portray our first introductory meeting and her office setting along with her leadership narrative.

Therefore, my approach was to seek more participants rather than less. With the objective of finding more participants, my search exhausted in most of the higher education institutions. I turned to the social media, finally. LinkedIn, a professional networking, was my first try and I looked through all my contacts in Qatar and their network of friends. I found Sara, leading in the area of research in one of the organizations. I found Sara's professional email and wrote to her introducing myself and my research. Sara¹⁰ was very prompt in her response and welcomed me to meet with her. Finally, Sara became my third research participant. Below, are the three case studies elaborating three female leaders' narratives: A'isha, Deena, and Sara. Fortunately, other leaders referred Khadija, Aamina, and Farha, became my motivation to actively seek out for more research participants.

My reflective dairy that started with scarce notes now read as "I need to find more participants, what if, any of the research participant withdraws as we proceed further" (November, 2016). With this in mind, I continued my search by asking Sara, and Deena as well to connect me to other leaders who might be interested to participate in my research. A'isha on the other hand has been through similar data collection process and always used to ask me if I found more research participants and looked for ways she could help me getting connected to female leaders in Qatar.

Maneuvering my way through data collection. My major source of data collection was through semi-structured interviews. Although, I had planned for non-participant observations to supplement my interviews, two out of three participants did not find a way to invite me to professional meetings. They believed it to be a sensitive issue since they will have to seek consent from other members in the meeting and that was not feasible to them as it may involve many senior management officials such as executive directors, deans, managers and so on. Following Riessman's (2008) suggestion with interviews as "narrative occasions" helped me develop detailed stories of A'isha, Deena and Sara. However, it was extremely challenging to provide several prompts to acquire a relevant response for my questions during interview. For instance, a couple leaders narrated their barriers to entering higher education or seeking jobs as a leadership experience. Although, it seemed irrelevant in the first stance, analyzing the data several times, helped me make connections to the leadership perspectives in general. Another

¹⁰ Sara's story will explain our first meeting and elaborate on her leadership experiences.

challenge as a researcher was to address my participants' clarification questions for one my interview questions about influence of Qatari Islamic context on their leadership style. I explained them from various perspectives trying to justify the Sharia legislative ruling in Qatar. Sometimes, the explanation also had to present my research argument as well as some Islamic leadership literature in detail. Yet, to most of my participants, they perceived leadership and religion to be separate entities.

Finally, navigating my way through data collection was a challenging experience for me as a researcher relying mostly on interviews to construct detailed stories of the research participants. During data collection, I was focusing on their told stories accompanied with their facial expressions, tones and actions in a social setting that helped me develop their lived experiences.

Juggling my positionality for data analysis. My decision to conduct this study directly relates to my own experiences in the educational settings having resided in Qatar for the past 6 years. I have about 8 years of experiences including both teaching and leading spanning from elementary school teaching through college in the GCC. Over this span, I served for a short span as a Primary school coordinator, but I have always observed leaders in their leadership roles. I always approached leadership from two perspectives in educational settings: from the leader's perspectives as well as the subordinate's perspectives. Since, my research touches on sensitive topics such leaders' perceptions as a female leader and their leadership experiences from an Islamic perspective, I tried to be particularly aware of possible tensions between my own positionality and the leaders' positionalities as they narrate their leadership experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). I played the role of an insider from many stances. First, I spoke to leaders of my same gender: female leaders. Second, our religious identities were similar: Muslims. Third, while listening to their experiences and stories I recalled some of leadership experiences that were similar to my experiences. Therefore, this involved extra awareness of my own leadership narrative. From my perspective, as an outsider, I am not a citizen of Qatar and therefore their experiences might differ from mine.

I was cognizant that objectivity is not a goal while conducting a narrative research, rather identifying my own subjectivities and navigating through those was a priority. I believed that asking my participants to share their leadership stories required a relationship of trust, openness, and respect between us. Therefore, using reflective journal "to keep focus on our internal

responses as researchers and capture our changing and developing understanding of method and content” was crucial (Etherington, 2009). In some instances, I also recorded my thoughts prior to the interview reminding myself of interview prompts and potential responses that I may receive from my participants. I also noted my anxiety, reactions, and thoughts after each interview and observation. Further, during the interview, I made notes that marked any changes in participants’ tones that helped me develop a close interpretation of their narratives. As I was interviewing these participants in a short span of a month and half, I was able to predict some of the themes for cross-case analyses. This helped me overcome my own bias and preconceived perceptions of my participants’ leadership stories.

Ultimately, I was extremely cautious that my salient religious identity and my knowledge on Islamic leadership did not interfere with my research purpose to illuminate female leadership stories in Qatar in the field of higher education. I was aware that I need to accept the differences in opinion and constantly reflected on this thought during the data collection and analysis. Therefore, I was more interested in what they say or how they interpret their own experiences rather than their actual experiences itself from an outsider perspective.

Summary

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approach to the study as an interpretivist discourse of research. I detail my research method as a narrative inquiry addressing the ontological and epistemological stance of a narrative inquiry. Then, I elaborate narrative methodology as applied in my study explaining in detail the participants, the data collection procedures, and my data analysis approach. Addressing the ethical issues was of great concern as a researcher for me. Hence, I explain ways I limit my biases acknowledging the subjectivities I bring to this research at various phases of my study. Furthermore, I also address voice, power and trustworthiness issues that I overcame in my study through constant reflection. Credibility of the research was met following Eisner’s three standards for qualitative inquiry: structural corroboration, consensual validity, and referential adequacy. Finally, in the last part of this chapter, I narrate the challenges I faced as a researcher as “Stories within a story” that includes many short narratives that highlight the challenges I overcame as a researcher through different phases of this study: participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, the limitations and strengths of this methodology is highlighted in this chapter. Hence, this chapter

paved my way to analyze the data comprehensively first by developing individual case studies and then carry out a cross-case analysis for a holistic picture of female Muslim leaders practices in Qatar in the field of higher education.

Chapter 4: Leadership Stories: In their words...

The research question guiding this study is as follows: How do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education? This research focuses on female leaders' experiences in higher education in an Islamic context to address four gaps in the literature: 1) that of *leader* narratives on leadership; 2) that of *female* leader narratives on leadership; 3) that of female leader narratives in *higher education*, and 4) that of female leaders *themselves* narrating about their experiences as a leader in *Qatari Islamic context* and the *educational reform*. Thus, the following individual leadership stories in a case study format can be interpreted from several perspectives. It presents general leadership narratives; female leaders' narratives; female leaders' narratives in higher education context and finally female leadership stories in Qatar as a context.

This chapter and the next two present Qatari female leaders' narratives as they narrate their leadership stories in the field of higher education in Qatar. Each leader has three or more years of leadership experience in the field of higher education. I develop detailed stories of their leadership experiences from semi-structured interviews and observations accompanied by my notes from my reflective journal. My intention is to develop a narrative case study in a meticulously sincere way, remaining as close as possible to the participants' own voices as well as reflecting on my own insider/outsider perspectives constantly. Each case study is presented in a separate chapter: chapters 4, 5, and 6 that are labelled with leader's pseudonyms.

A'isha - "A critical reflexive leader"

A'isha works in one of leading research organizations Al Danish Institute as the Director of Research. Al Danish constitutes of many separate departments of which research is one of the departments. A'isha has over nineteen years of professional experience in education of which five or more years has been in a leadership position. A'isha has her terminal degree in the field of education: her Doctorate of Philosophy degree. In addition to serving as a Research Director, A'isha also taught education courses for a few semesters in a University in Qatar. I conducted three interviews with A'isha that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. I also observed A'isha in five of her professional meetings at various levels: research team meetings, an international

collaboration meeting, a guest speaker meeting, and a meeting that involved all the members of Al Danish.

My initial interviews and observations mostly took place in her office and later one of the interviews was in her home and the other in a student center in a university. Al Danish is located on the outskirts of Doha and is a part of a huge education campus. It is a two-story building situated at one end of a series of look-alike buildings. A huge brown wooden door leads a colorful twin lobby area. The front of the lobby was furnished with black and white color tones couches and tables with various research reports and books on display shelves. The walls were covered with huge pictures of global education scenarios. The inner lobby was with monotonous purple tones and had comfortable couches and white center tables. This area seemed more of a quiet study area that also had a big book shelf towards the end of the wall. To my right was a small reception area where the security officer was seated and welcomed me. There were also many individual work spaces in separate rooms on either side of a long corridor. The end of the corridor to the right of the entrance had a big meeting room. A small stairway led me to the first floor. It had three offices: the research assistants, the manager and right in front was A'isha's office. All the office spaces were filled with people busily working on their tasks.

A'isha's office had a small circular meeting table right in front and next to it was a book shelf. Her desk and chair were to the right of her room entrance, with two guest chairs in front. Her desk was neatly organized but reflected a busy place. To the left of her desk was another book shelf. From the moment I walked into A'isha's office, I felt welcomed. Smart, kind, and helpful to everyone are three simplest words to describe her. A mum of five and a full-time employee; balancing work and family has become her passion these days, A'isha remarked. My first interview with A'isha was in late March, 2017 from 10-11 am in her office. Having arrived there few minutes prior to the meeting, my relationship with her as a friend encouraged me to catch up a little chat before we started. A'isha having gone through this phase of data collection for her own research was extremely cooperative and gave me a few minutes to set up my voice recorder, my computer to take field notes and had a backup recorder on for the interview. I was ready at the meeting table few minutes before 10 am and A'isha was working on a couple things. Yet, she was with me ready for the interview sharp at 10 am. I was struck by her eagerness to keep up with time (Field notes, March, 2017).

“It’s more about *us* rather than *me* as a leader”

After talking through the demographic questions in detail along with the selection of a pseudonym as per the research protocol, I pose my first interview question “How do you define leadership?” I also added that this is the simplest question of all, however you may have loads to say about this, reflecting on our previous discussions surrounding educational issues. Without any delay, A’isha uttered,

It seems simple, but it is very complicated. It is so strange for me to define leadership.

Sometimes when you are researching, working on a specific concept like leadership, it is really hard to define it. It has different components. We cannot say what leadership is.

This spontaneous critical reflection on ways to define leadership really hit me with a further belief of gaining in-depth interviews with A’isha for my research (Field notes, March 2017).

A’isha calmly continued that leadership includes, 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on; such as leading a team, setting a direction, having a vision, providing human and financial resources to turn this vision to reality and much more. She then consolidated her thoughts and commented “leadership is the vehicle, a way to implement specific vision that allows the team to work in a collaborative way.” A’isha also added that these thoughts are a derivative of her experiences rather than the literature. As I had assumed, A’isha had more to say about leadership. With a simplest prompt of “would you like to add more” she continued saying that decision making is another important component that is part and parcel of leadership. She further elaborated that decision making is not and should not just be ascribed to the boss, a leader, a manager, or a director, rather it is “how to create the environment that will allow your team to make decisions: big or small.” As a leader, A’isha reflected that her main focus was to empower her team members. A’isha believes that involving them in the tasks as responsible individuals is beneficial for their own growth and development. She further elaborated that when it comes to decision making, she coaches the team member in such a way that rather than giving them the answers straightaway, she challenges them by prompting questions such as “What do you think? How can we proceed further with this?” that in turn puts the team member in a position to think of various possible strategies and maneuver their way in the light of A’isha’s guidance. She also confirmed that such practices also help in team building.

A'isha also highlighted the component of diversity in her team with individuals of different abilities, qualifications, backgrounds, and different expectations. She acknowledges that diversity is one of the leadership challenges for managing people and managing their expectations. However, she builds a relationship on the foundation of trust with her team. Her initial few weeks after taking any leadership position is spent understanding the team members by talking to them to know each other and this is a strategy that A'isha deploys to build her team on trust. She develops a culture of respect and trust within members of the organization and follows same ethical practices for all members. This also helps A'isha to understand each team members' personal scenarios too as she believes that working round the clock is not productive. Rather, she argues "each one of us needs a real break from work for two main reasons: for family and other priorities outside the office and for productivity." Contrary, A'isha also understands that during peak times when there is any national or international event that Al Danish hosts, there might be some odd working hours for her team members. A'isha takes the advantage of these induction weeks and sets her goals and expectations with her team. A'isha repeatedly echoed similar thoughts of team building and collaboration as she defined leadership and said, "If my team is successful, I am successful as well," but the time and effort needed to communicate this to her team was concerning. She always wants her team members to understand her and work collaboratively.

"Being a female leader...It's tough"

My field notes stated that A'isha could go on and on trying to define leadership from her perspectives and leadership experiences. When another lens was added to the initial question like "what it means for her to be a female leader?" A'isha plainly said, "It's tough." She further explained that she is reflecting generally on the hurdles she faced to get into this leadership position. Her opinion was that for a female with a Ph. D. degree, many organizations see such women as over qualified as she was offered many lower profile jobs that did not match her expertise and qualifications. A'isha reiterated justifying her lens of female leadership as "tough" because the job market for women "was a sign that I wasn't welcomed and this is a really sensitive topic because it did not happen only with me but to my other colleagues too who were qualified from elite universities." A'isha added that "the culture here for female is sometimes not welcomed and you have to find the right channel and the right path." Talking about the culture in Qatar, A'isha added that sometimes it is hard to differentiate between the job title and

the original contribution that particular position demands and “some people are damaging this.” As an insider and outsider in the context of Qatar, I felt like A’isha echoed my thoughts. A’isha seemed to be critical and open in her thoughts as she was sharing her experiences, but at the same time expressed two contradicting opinions. A’isha was hesitant to generalize her experiences to other friends’ experiences commenting on the issue of validity of the content shared while responding to other interview questions. Although, these comments from A’isha do not directly relate to my question on female leadership, it speaks to the general challenges in reaching such leadership positions touching on the issues of gender and career path. A’isha continued that in Qatar there are equal opportunities for men and women, however, it is difficult to generalize her opinion. She admits that it may differ from one organization to another. When asked for clarification, A’isha stated “It’s more about your role, your position, and your contribution to the organization that matters the most.” When asked for any concrete examples or stories from her experiences, she narrated that some of her friends complain about role of gender, but for A’isha that information is not validated enough to share and generalize her opinion on role of gender.

As my interviews were semi-structured, I asked for clarification of her initial expression “tough” in terms of her leadership experience at Al Danish. She elaborates that being a female leader, to work in Al Danish, a reputed international education and research platform “is not only a great opportunity but also a huge responsibility.” A’isha enjoys conducting research but to represent Al Danish on an international level addressing diverse educational issues needed lots of hard work and practice. She narrates one of her experience,

I organized a research event and served as a chair of the research panel moderating the session. The research area was not of my expertise. And organizing this event was not just in terms of administration, it was more of content development. I had to bring the global perspectives on this research topic generally and also adapt to the local context of Qatar. This was my main focus, so, I researched about the topic, studied main ideas, consolidated my thoughts and met with local stakeholders to incorporate their best practices. The event was a success, all this could not have happened if I did not have done my homework, and this is my perspective.

This experience of A'isha elaborated what she meant “tough” when it comes to female leadership. She added that the time and energy required to research a new field and to moderate a session is demanding. Although, the duality of being a mom and a full-time leader was expressed in her conversations, A'isha expressed her delight in her leadership role. She added that, “Its more than managing people, more than dealing with conflicts, more than managing the time... It's more of the content itself why I enjoy research.” This reflected her optimism towards her work as well as her ability to take on challenges and work under pressure.

“Changes in leadership practices depends on the task, the people, and time allotted”

A'isha was very clear and organized in her thoughts. To most of the responses she responded in clear and concise language then categorized it for further clarification. To the prompt of whether and how her leadership practices have changed over time, A'isha tied this notion back to the idea of collaboration. She explained “it's not about how my leadership has changed, it is more about helping my team to understand me and myself understanding them.” She elaborated that it depends on three factors: the task, the people I work with, and the time allotted for the task completion. A'isha continued,

Of course, there are ups and downs and it depends on three things: a) the task- if I am working with an author for research reports or working on an event or a training or workshop event; b) the person I am working with, for instance my leadership role would be different when I am working with a colleague of similar qualification and abilities like me than working with a person who has different skills and abilities; c) the timing- how close or farther the deadline for a task is.

For A'isha all these factors influence her leadership role. She critically reflects that as a leader she also gets frustrated when people learn things slowly and differently and thinks that she lacks patience sometimes. However, she confesses that “as humans we respond to challenges differently.” A'isha continued that she sometimes speaks to herself thinking that “why don't they get it, it's so simple.” She feels like sometimes things can be done quickly rather than conducting a series of meetings for discussions and decision making. She immediately compares her K-12 teaching experience with a classroom full of diverse kids with different abilities to that of this work setting with adults. Furthermore, A'isha argues that,

There is a limit to what you can teach adults. Of course, we can work case by case, but again there is a component of self-development too that every individual needs to work on themselves. There are certain things you cannot teach/coach and it comes from the abilities of a person.

On the other hand, A'isha also agrees that “we don't live in an ideal world,” and her leadership depends on the situation.

A'isha's constant reflexive nature critiquing herself as a leader turned out to be very beneficial for my research. A'isha presented detailed responses to the questions I posed her and always tried to present it from different lenses. With regards to the lack of patience, on one hand A'isha concludes that “this is my perception, but maybe other people need more time and as a leader I need to understand their abilities.” On the other, she thinks that she more often blames herself more than what she should. She said, “I see it as my weakness rather than their weakness and it's not helpful but that's the only excuse.” With mixed thoughts, A'isha concludes that her leadership practices since she began at Al Danish depends on the first few induction weeks of team building and developing a relationship of respect and trust. With a smile on her face she also adds that this formula not only works in professional settings but also in personal lives.

A'isha narrates one of her personal experiences as to how building trust and culture of respect helps her overcome the challenge of being a mum and balancing her family and work. She said,

I have five children you know and keeping up with their academics amidst my full time busy job is challenging. So, I build that foundation with my kids' teachers. I communicate with the teachers and the school and get updates via email. I also talk to the teachers and they send me messages on phone to update about all things. This in turn shows the school that my child's education is a priority for me. Communication is the key here.

Charming A'isha also adds that, sometimes if “I am on a business trip, I ask teachers to hug my 7-year-old son.” This quote sums up A'isha's leadership role and ways she tries to navigate these challenges.

A'isha continued sharing her stories and recalled a conversation with one of her friends. She added that her friend was amazed to see her energy and dedication towards her work and the way she balances her work and family. Her friend was curious to know the secret of her strengths. To this A'isha narrated:

Subhan Allah¹¹, it's due to the fajr¹² prayer that I function really actively. It's especially during those early morning hours, my brain is active, and I get done work faster. At that time, you get to see your kids and the satisfaction that you derive that you are not neglecting the kids and spending time with them gives me most energy, let it be as simple as attending a swimming session with them.

A'isha comfortably shared her experiences continued that these practices are also a result of her upbringing. She was thankful to her parents and her husband for their support in carrying out her daily chores and leadership role. My field note read, "A'isha has so many different perspectives and leadership practices to share; prompting her with questions is a key to extract in-depth information" (Field notes, March 2017).

With all these positive thoughts, A'isha adds that it is still tough as it affects her health, and especially her relationships outside immediate family members. This conversation steered into addressing another leadership challenge, societal events as a cultural barrier. She explained that as a Qatari woman, she is expected to attend many social gatherings, weddings, or get to gather that her work schedule does not give way for. She remarks that she has to bear comments such as "Oh, A'isha is not attending the gatherings these days and so on" and she feels a social pressure. She added that initially in her profession she used to worry about other people's comments trying to please everyone, but later she understood her priorities and let things go. However, A'isha concluded "There is a lot of pressure on what our community expects from a female, they don't expect the same from a male, of course" that echoed the challenge of being a female leader.

Ultimately, A'isha consolidating her thoughts on changes in her leadership style over time notes that as her leadership experiences spans for longer period she learns from both the

¹¹ Glory be to Allah (SWT)

¹² One of the obligatory prayers; it is prayed at dawn

positive and negative experiences. She concludes, “We learn from tasks, experiences or the problems we face even if we get interrupted there is a take away for us as a leader.”

“The missing part is that we don’t reflect, or we don’t relate to in our own tradition”

It was another bright Sunday around mid-March; I was all set to meet A’isha on a Monday. Unfortunately, the meeting scheduled with A’isha had to be postponed due to an emergency meeting that arose up for her. A’isha assured that she will give me a suitable time to catch up for sure. Desperately waiting for A’isha’s message, I chalked down my reflection, “As a researcher, I need to be patient, be prepared for these sudden changes in schedules. I may have to tweak timelines as each day passes and I need to have more backup plans if needed” (Field notes, March 2017). A’isha called me back Monday evening, asking me if I could see her at her home for the second interview. This time she scheduled to meet late in the evening after her work. I could sense A’isha’s commitment to my research (Field notes, March 2017).

It was a pleasant evening around 6 pm in the evening with dark clouds yet humid climate. A’isha resided in a huge residential apartment complex about twenty minutes away from my home. Many identical stand-alone town homes were there along the street on either side. The second right from there led to A’isha’s home. I arrived there on time and A’isha wholeheartedly welcomed me with Islamic greetings, a cultural cheek-cheek kiss, and a hug. It was calm and quiet inside. A’isha admitted that her children are away for an outing and she took this opportunity for my interview. Thanking A’isha and after a quick recap of our first interview, I continued with my interview questions.

A’isha always made sure that she understands the questions accurately so that she can give me meaningful responses. To the question on whether A’isha thinks her leadership style to be influenced by the Islamic context of Qatar for decision making and so on, A’isha asked for clarification on this question. I explained in detail that Qatar as a country practices Sha’ria as their legislative law, also the Ministry of Education incorporates Islamic teaching and practices in their curriculum, so I asked A’isha to reflect on her leadership experiences and narrate some instances where she may or may not incorporate Islamic teachings and practices. After a moment of silence, reflexive A’isha remarked:

Because we are Muslims, we see this as the right way. The idea of team building, and relationship of respect and trust is both Sha'ria driven as well as this is evident in Western leadership theories...and what about the non-Muslims who also practice these in their profession. (A'isha, Interview 2)

Narrowing down her thoughts, A'isha argued that it is not more about her leadership style whether it is Islamic or not. Rather, the lens of Islam comes in when it is considering decision making. She adds that from her perspective, "What is halal¹³ and what is haram¹⁴ is more important when thinking about Islam." Nevertheless, A'isha agreed that Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has many leadership examples. She went on to say "If we look at the history of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his life as such, his treatment towards his wives, his friends, his companions, and overall if we consider the ways he use to empower people is astounding." A'isha also narrated one of the hadeeth of how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had delegated Usama bin Zaid (RA¹⁵) at a very young age to lead an army amongst many senior soldiers and many other migrants from Makkah as well as elderly people from Madinah. Sahih Al-Bukhari details this Hadith as

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: The Prophet sent an army under the command of Usama bin Zaid. When some people criticized his leadership, the Prophet said, "If you are criticizing Usama's leadership, you used to criticize his father's leadership before. By Allah! He was worthy of leadership and was one of the dearest persons to me, and (now) this (i.e. Usama) is one of the dearest to me after him (i.e. Zaid)." (Riyad al-saliheen, Hadith 57)

A'isha stressed that it's more about the team we work with and we should empower the team members based on their capabilities.

Puzzled A'isha continued saying that drawing clear lines between the sources of my leadership style is challenging. "Is it from Islamic sources... from my religion? Or is it from my practices? I don't know," remarked A'isha. She clarified that when it comes to halal and haram,

¹³ Permissible or lawful in Islam

¹⁴ Prohibited or unlawful in Islam

¹⁵ "RadhiAllahu anhu"- an Arabic phrase meaning "Allah is pleased with him"

it is easy for her to reflect on what is right and what is wrong but when it comes to leadership practices “I don’t think that I am practicing this because it’s Islamic or Western.” After a long pause, A’isha imagined one of her leadership responsibility such as handling the budget, she thinks about being fair and honest with what she does. She went on to say that “it’s not only about the budget, leadership is a Zimmah [responsibility]; for instance, whatever task I provide for my ‘x’ team member, I need to provide it as an opportunity for their growth.” She also added that when she has to provide an appraisal for her team members she provides an honest feedback highlighting the positives and communicating the negatives in the best possible way to the team member for their personal growth. A’isha again stated that these fair and honest practices are not just confined to Islam, many other religions also stress on that and practice it. However, she concluded that the idea of “accountability to Allah” as a constant thought in our minds defining our actions makes Islamic leadership unique.

Taking a deep breath and a sigh of disappointment, A’isha stated that in her opinion “the missing part is that we don’t reflect, or we don’t relate to in our own tradition because we practice the dominant Western theories.” She added that the Western leadership theories are existing in this sphere for ages and have been engrained in our daily practices. Furthermore, A’isha as a researcher herself, continued to talk about the significance of my research and my contribution to the literature of Islamic leadership practices through this research. She stated that bringing Islamic leadership style on a global platform would be a great contribution to our community. She narrated one of her conversations with a professor at an international conference, “I met with this professor in one of the conferences and he asked me ‘A’isha, we don’t hear from many people from your side, that part of the world.” A’isha explained saying that the research culture has still not become very common in our culture.

Finally, A’isha concluded there are so many different factors that influence her leadership style, but we have not identified the source. It can be from Western leadership, it can be from academic literature, or it can be from Islamic leadership, A’isha stated. She stressed that she has not reflected enough to think what the source is. Furthermore, A’isha said that there are more factors such as culture, skills and abilities of an individual, their upbringing, and even the history that influences her leadership style.

“Leadership is a social activity...does not come in a vacuum”

Reinforcing her thoughts about her leadership style being influenced by her team members, the task and the timing itself, A’isha continued to share her memorable leadership experiences upon asking for any challenging or complementary leadership stories. She claimed, “It’s not only about me, it’s more about the people or the team I work with.” For instance, A’isha explained that when she has a team member with many years of experience in the research field, with high skills and capabilities, such person will know what is needed for a task and it is “easier to work on the same page” with competent people. Hence, her leadership experience becomes complementing in this situation. Whereas, she narrated that if a team member does not have enough skills to carry out a task independently, the scenario automatically becomes challenging. She confirmed that it is not more about whether the team member is a male or female, rather it is more about “how they perceive my leadership.” She continued that as a leader, she has certain values to work as a team and accomplish certain tasks. Therefore, tying this back to building trust and mutual relationship with team members becomes a priority for A’isha.

Extending her thoughts, A’isha added more to her definition of leadership as she was sharing her memorable experiences. A’isha explains that:

Leadership is a social activity, a social process that involves giving and taking. If the team members have the skills and capabilities to carry out tasks efficiently, leadership is a success. It actually needs a similar environment. It does not come in a vacuum.

She narrated one of her complementary leadership experiences reflecting back to the first year of her leadership at Al Danish. A’isha stated that it was both a challenging and a complementing experience for her as she reiterated, “it depends on how I perceive things.” She continued saying that it was challenging to execute the tasks, however, the results were fruitful. Hence, for A’isha this experience is more of a complementary leadership experience than a challenging one. A’isha continued,

It was previous year when the senior management of Al Danish had asked to produce research reports and gave us a very short notice. Starting from identifying the partners to identifying the topics and the local stakeholders to collaborate for these reports, it was

very difficult. Time was the main factor. I succeeded in this mainly because I felt committed to this. I had to prove this as a Director of Research. It was hard as it was during Ramadan and my father passed away during that period. However, my approach was to deal with the tasks was to take it one at a time. It was more of problem solving. For instance, I had to find research reviewers, but many denied due to the short time frame. Therefore, I contacted the authors to list out the reviewers who might undertake the task in this scenario. Similarly, for final editing, it not possible for my small team to carry out these tasks. And, the solution to this was to hire freelancers. This is actually a story of unknown situation, tight deadlines with a very high expectation.

Finally, A'isha concluded saying that her problem-solving approach turned out to be very positive for her. The event was extremely successful, and she received positive feedback from her superiors that involved top-notch Qatari officials including the Ministerial members of Qatar.

Engrossed deeply in these conversations, A'isha and I realized that the time for interview was up. I ended my interview with loads of impressive thoughts about A'isha and ways she had navigated through this leadership experience (Field notes, March 2017). As I use to confirm my follow-up interview with my leaders on the day of interviews, this time A'isha told she will inform me of a suitable time for our last interview.

Our third meeting was in a student center in one of the universities in Qatar. This meeting was also scheduled after her office hours. The student center was located inside a huge university. It was well furnished with white tables and chairs. We selected a quiet and comfortable place to continue our conversations. My field notes marked A'isha's dedication and commitment to my research, despite me reiterating the research protocols and her freedom to opt out of my research at any time. To this A'isha replied, "Tasneem, as a researcher myself, I understand the hardship of collecting qualitative data, and I want to help you by all means." With contentment and smile, I continued interviewing A'isha.

Our discussion began with A'isha sharing one of her challenging leadership experience. With a feeling of disappointment A'isha narrated that one day she received an email from one of the team members complaining about the administrative tasks he/she has to deal with, despite designated as a researcher. In a low tone, she continued that she felt hurt not because of the

complaints she received rather it was more because it shook the trust and the relationship that they had as a team. However, A'isha emphasized that she always encouraged her team members to share their concerns but agreed that probably she did not expect that from this person (Field notes, March 2017). So, A'isha's approach to this scenario to meet with her team member personally, the next day and sort out his/her concerns. She took a coaching approach that had lasted for about an hour negotiating and explaining the roles she herself has been performing as a Director of research. She commented, "We all do admin jobs, as leaders too. It's just that we need to understand the situation." A'isha also said that the key in solving this issue was "respect" that we had for each other and spending enough time with him/her to make them understand my leadership approaches and styles. She concluded saying, "this story is related to how my experiences have changed over time, because, the more we work together I feel like we tend to face more challenges, but also successful things come at the same time."

Further, A'isha explained that sometimes it is a struggle to make others understand your intention behind the execution of tasks. Since, she has a nature of helping people, for their own growth, A'isha also creates opportunities in her leadership role, so that her team members' personal and professional growth occurs simultaneously. But, she feels sometimes people do not appreciate that and she understands that maybe they perceive things differently.

Along the same thoughts, A'isha narrated another short experience where one of her colleagues who misunderstood her intentions.

It was a huge meeting with all the members of Al Danish in the meeting room. The agenda of the meeting was to discuss the plans for a future event and each director and manager of Al Danish were sharing their thoughts. When, A'isha expressed her concern about planning well ahead of the timeline especially for the research area, one of event organizer replied back with sarcasm as though it is too early. At that time, I kept quiet. I could have defended myself that time but, respecting everybody's time was my priority. But later, I met that person and explained my point as we are very good friends and usually we both understand each other very well, including our work. (A'isha, Interview 3)

As usual, A'isha's reflexivity crept in and she commented that might be her colleague was in a bad mood or under stress. Her style of justifying each scenario became a part of her leadership style. Finally, her thoughts tied back to her religious faith and she remarked: "Whatever you do in this life, Allah will surely help you... Now or later, that's my belief."

"I lead the discussions; I lead the material... to make my teaching more meaningful and interactive"

My final question to complete the statement, "Being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is like...", A'isha related her experiences during her role as an Assistant professor. She added a new perspective due to the dual leadership experiences she brings to my research. A'isha stated:

Being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is more about bringing my teaching values and principles to the forefront. How to make your session interesting is my priority. And this is what you 'lead' in higher education. From my perspective, for teaching we do not lead a team of people as I do at Al Danish, but rather, I lead the discussions, I lead the material, and I lead the time... to meet student's expectations and to make my teaching more meaningful and interactive. So, I brought in my K-12 teaching experiences to keep my students engaged and embedded it into higher education as well.

A'isha was finding it hard to interpret this question in her current leadership position due to the way she sees higher education. For my study, I included the field of research as a part of higher education, but A'isha was keeping it separate.

For my final prompt to share anything that she would like regarding my research A'isha seemed to be juggling her thoughts around the idea of Islamic leadership and the way she manages her leadership role both with her subordinates as well as with the senior management team. Recalling the idea of leadership as a social process, A'isha explained that this process differs when it is with her team members to that of when she is with senior management team. She elaborated that with her team it is more about teamwork and accomplishing a task, the commitment to the task itself. However, with the senior management, the other directors, and her superiors, it is more about the support she derives from them at challenging times. A'isha added that with the senior management team, "when I am stuck with something, I share, and it is

about finding the right advice to find a solution, it is the support I get from them.” She then continued saying that it is also the expectation and the type of task she is working on influences her leadership needs. A’isha tried to draw a Venn diagram with three circles: herself, her team, and her senior management team, intersecting at one point. She explained how the intensity of her leadership varies in these two scenarios. With her subordinates, she remarks that it is more of a daily routine, leading and managing day-to-day activities making sure that they accomplished the assigned tasks. On the other hand, with the senior management team, she argues that it is more of an emotional relationship, as each one is a leader who understands her very well and could see things from her lens. She also, admits that emotional relationship also exists between her team members too, trying to understand their personal lives and so forth, nevertheless, it is surely different.

A’isha consolidated her thoughts and added that her leadership style is more of collaboration, empowering her team, setting herself as a role model, and giving those opportunities to grow. She was still identifying her source of leadership style. She argued that, “as Muslims we are not documenting or referring our best practices drawn from Islam and Sunnah,” but on the other hand, it is also about her upbringing. It is a “natural flow for me, it is by default,” A’isha stated. She posited that most of the leadership theories and styles from Western perspective are also evident in the Islamic literature, so drawing clear lines to her source of leadership becomes challenging for her. She extended her thoughts and said:

It is more about whether you are practicing these Islamic values. There may be many Muslims, who are leaders and practice such styles, but there may also be many Muslims, who do not practice it. My main point is that there may be also many non-Muslims who practice such leadership values similar to Islamic leadership and many non-Muslims who do not. So, there is no contradiction in these literatures. (Aisha, Interview 3)

Here, A’isha’s experiences presented a new perspective to my research. She was presenting her thoughts on the similarities in leadership literature from both the West and the Islam. My reflection noted, “A’isha has experience in research and education itself that may be influencing her thoughts. Also, there is a possibility that my prompts and clarification of questions upon request could have also influenced the way she perceives Islamic leadership” (Field notes, March 2017). With this in mind, A’isha summed up her thoughts that “Islam does not only mean

fasting, praying, wearing hijab, but it is more about our intention, our in-depth practices, how we communicate with people, how we behave and treat others.” She also added that this research gave her an opportunity to reflect on her practices and go back to the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at all times as a Muslim.

Observations: Punctuality, Commitment, and Empowerment

In closing, summarizing A’isha’s leadership experiences with her own leadership perceptions and the experiences she shared, my analysis shows that her leadership skills and styles resonated in her professional observations really well. A’isha seemed to be practicing what she was preaching. To clarify, it was only A’isha among all the three research participants that allowed me to observe her in her professional meetings. For other participants this was overcome by one of the interview questions asking to describe a typical professional meeting in detail (See Appendix- A). The purpose of my non-participant observations was more to focus on A’isha’s leadership style, skills and qualities as a leader and not on the content of the meeting. A’isha tried to invite me for meetings at different levels. In the first observation, A’isha was meeting with her team of 5 members, including herself as the director of the team, the manager and other researchers. This observation was following her first interview. A’isha led me to the big meeting room and introduced me to her colleagues. She asked for their consent on my observation and honored me describe my research to her team. As the meeting began, one of the members passed on an agenda sheet and each member took turns elaborating the items on the agenda. The first quality I noticed as a leader in A’isha was her nature as a “keen listener.” As they were discussing about a timeline for a task, she was very particular about meeting the deadlines. This reflected her punctuality as seen during her interviews with her dedication and promptness to time. At times, A’isha also asked for clarification giving her team members opportunities to brainstorm and reflect more on their assigned tasks. This echoed her thoughts on “empowering her team.” When one of her team members raised an issue on understanding the budget issues, A’isha was prompt on providing guidance to him/her and clarified that she will check with the accounts specialist for further clarification. A’isha was not hesitant to share her thoughts as well as admit anything that she is not aware of such as seeking help for budget.

When it comes to empowerment and decision-making, A’isha was just doing what she told earlier in the interview. A’isha was always keen on “how to create the environment that will

allow her team to make decisions: big or small.” When discussing the progress of the research team in another senior level meeting, A’isha left it to her team members to decide and develop what they would like to present during their meeting with Al Danish staff. She claims, that she wants the whole team to be “the voice of the research team,” rather than herself just taking the credit. She commented that, “sometimes, the culture here is the leaders take the credit of their team work,” but she was desperate on communicating the opposite to her team members. A’isha explained that her collaborative leadership style celebrates the efforts of all team members. Moreover, for A’isha this was “unfair,” and she added that this is from her upbringing and her default Islamic values. She also thinks that taking other’s credit is also haram in Islam (Aisha, Interview 3).

A’isha also used delegative leadership approach where she delegates the members with a task for their own development. However, she was very particular about the quality of information each member would be sharing. As she was describing her meetings in one of the interviews, she explained that if she has to assign a member to communicate with international researcher for instance, she chooses the team member depending upon their skills and capabilities to deal with the task appropriately. A’isha made sure that she is available all the time and coaches them when needed.

Unlike all her interviews and observations, A’isha came late to one of her meetings (Observation 2). Yet, she had communicated with one of her team members explaining about an unusual traffic along her way to office and delegated one of them to lead the meeting. This meeting had her research team but also an additional international member virtually over phone discussing about a future event. Upon arriving, A’isha just continued from where the meeting was, as one of the team member was texting her the progress of the meeting. It was a unique experience to me where a director was in such a relationship with her team. She reflected her commitment to being punctual and starting the meeting on time and at the same time, she empowered her team member to lead the meeting and the call (Field notes, March 2017). This reiterated her notion of team building, relationship of trust and respect, as well as the idea of her success with the team’s success.

Summary

This chapter presents a case study narrative of A'isha who is a critical reflexive leader. In this chapter, I develop A'isha's narrative in her own words. Based on her response to each of the interview questions, this chapter's each section is developed. A full synthesis and analysis of this chapter is included in Chapter 7 "Cross-case analysis and discussion" that is developed by analyzing the leadership stories of all three female Qatari leaders.

A'isha is a smart, kind, and helpful leader who has over nineteen years of professional experience in education of which five or more years has been in a leadership position. A'isha works in one of leading research organizations as the Director of Research at Al Danish Institute. Al Danish constitutes of many separate departments of which research is one of the departments. In addition to this position, A'isha also taught education courses for a couple semesters in a University in Qatar. I conducted three interviews with A'isha that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. I also observed A'isha in five of her professional meetings at various levels: research team meetings, an international collaboration meeting, a guest speaker meeting, and a meeting that involved all the members of Al Danish.

A'isha's leadership focused more on the empowerment of the team members and functioned as a collaborative effort, rather than individually leading by authority. She believes that leadership is a social activity that involves mutual involvement and that it does not occur in a vacuum. Female leadership for A'isha is "tough" as she believes navigating through the tensions of cultural pressures against women, work pressure, and balancing work/family is challenging. A'isha is a reflexive leader and she explains that the leadership behaviors and styles that Islamic leadership emphasizes is also present in Western leadership theories. However, she feels there is a lack of reflection on the source of leadership. From an Islamic educational leadership theory perspective, A'isha was a reflexive leader who considered halal and haram in her leadership actions from an Islamic lens. She also believed her leadership is an *amanah* and is accountable for her actions in the hereafter. A'isha's observations overlapped with her interview narrations and portrayed her as a punctual and a committed leader who leads to empower her team members. In sum, A'isha's leadership was more about working as a team towards a shared vision, empowering her team members, adapting her leadership to individual needs of team members, and setting herself as a role model.

Chapter 5: Leadership Stories: In their words...

Deena – “An optimistic leader”

Deena works as the Head of department in one of the Universities in Qatar: Doha University¹⁶. Doha University is a very big campus located in the heart of the Doha city and is one of the oldest Universities in Qatar that hosts many colleges. With huge student enrollment and its operation since many decades, life in Doha University was very organized, yet with tight schedules. Many colleges were recently renovated with advanced facilities for students. Deena has about twenty years of experience in the field of education that includes her eight years of leadership experience. Deena's education rooted in applied sciences and prior to this position as the Head of department, Deena served as a Head of projects section in another esteemed organization in Qatar. Deena has a Doctor of Philosophy degree and in addition to her leadership role, Deena also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at Doha University as an Assistant professor. I conducted three interviews with Deena that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. Unfortunately, no observations were done with Deena and this was substituted with one of the interview questions that summarized professional meetings in Deena's own words.

My interviews with Deena took place in two of her offices. As the Head of department, Deena was leading both the male and the female colleges that were quite far apart, hence she had two offices. She had assigned two days of the week to work from the female section and three days from male section. My introductory meeting with Deena was in her male section office. On a hot day, mid-March, I walked a long distance from the drop off location after leading a long driveway from the huge main entrance of the Doha University. Her office was located in one of the corridors of the male campus. It was a huge concrete building with identical pathways and interconnected corridors. Arriving there well ahead of time, I met with Deena's secretary outside her office. She informed Deena about my presence and Deena welcomed me into her room at the scheduled meeting time. A small door from within the secretary's office led to Deena's room. It was a horizontal layout and to my right was a huge meeting table compactly setup that was partially covered with the room door when open. To my front were two bookshelves. The left side of the room had Deena's work desk and chair with few visitor's chairs in front of it.

¹⁶ Doha University is a pseudonym for Deena's workplace.

The bookshelves were holding some books, files and many certificates of accomplishments and trophies.

Introducing myself with Islamic greetings, I went on to introduce my research to Deena and explained my research protocols. Deena seemed to be an inquisitive person, and she was curious to know more about me as an individual, my family, and my research interests in general. Deena expressed her interest in educational research too and we had a general discussion about the challenges the education system is facing nationally. Deena, then agreed to participate in my study and we scheduled our first interview the following day, Tuesday. However, Deena did not want me to voice record her interview. She explained that she feels uncomfortable in such settings and she clarified that she might not be open in her thoughts when the recorder is on. She justified that it is also better for my research as “I [Deena] will not be myself if I am recorded.” Deena assured that she will be slow in her speech that will allow me to take notes. Yet, I felt this is going to be challenging for me to focus on the interview and simultaneously take all notes (Field notes, March 2017). Moreover, Deena was a little hesitant to allow me to observe her in her professional meetings. She justified saying that she may have to seek consent from her superiors as most of her meetings involve faculties that might not agree to it. However, she assured me that if she finds any suitable meetings that I can observe she will surely invite me. With mixed thoughts, I left Deena’s office thinking that

Should I seek some other research participant who agrees to both interview and observe or should I just use my interview question on description of meetings as a means to imagine her leadership in such settings? I already approached many female leaders in Qatar and after many efforts I found Deena willing to participate in my study. (Field notes, March 2017)

Finally, I decided to interview in hope that once my interviews progress may be Deena will find some meetings that I can observe. In fact, at the end of each interview, I requested Deena for an appointment to observe her. Every time, Deena assured me that she will intimate me if there is any during that week. I could always sense Deena’s willingness to help me out but hesitant to reach out to her other committee members.

With a clear location of Deena's office this time, I arrived on time for the meeting. Deena was caught up in another meeting, but her secretary assured me she will be finishing in few minutes. Creating a new space on my laptop to add detailed notes of Deena's interview and with plans to use many short hand codes/notes, I was waiting to be called in. Few minutes later, Deena stepped out and welcomed me with a great smile. Deena preferred to use the meeting table as it will be convenient for my notetaking.

“I could not have led this department successfully if I had not made all faculty sail in the same boat, including me”

With introductory demographic questions about Deena's leadership roles, I pose my first question to define leadership from her lens. Her responses included a variety of thoughts. After a short pause, Deena said, “Leading is a gift, not everyone can do it; many people can manage but not lead.” Keenly listening to Deena, I looked into her eyes deploying the interview technique to avail detailed responses from interviewees; I was waiting for Deena to continue. After much thought, Deena continued in a slow pace:

A leader makes the team believe in her ideas, inspires, and motivates them to carry on the tasks. The leader themselves becomes a part of the team, just as a normal team member and accepts their ideas, listens to their contradictions and encourages a dialogue for team work. (Deena, Interview 1)

Deena added many elements to her definition of leadership. She believed in teamwork and mutual understanding between team members. She also emphasized that leaders ought to possess the skills to motivate their team and work collaboratively. She also added that her recent leadership role is effective because she deploys teamwork to its best. Deena extended her thoughts saying,

I could not have led this department successfully if I had not made all faculty sail in the same boat, including me. It would not have been possible, if I had not made them believe in team work and made them believe that any achievement is everybody's achievement.” (Deena, Interview 1)

Although Deena tried to elaborate her responses, I felt she was brief in her responses. At some point her experiences and the information she shared were saturated. My reflection noted

that “is there a better way to phrase my interview questions? Is it the issue of language barrier? Or is this just Deena’s nature that she is concise in her responses?” (Field notes, March 2017).

“Leadership would not be different for me if I were a male”

Upon asking, what it means for her to be a female leader, Deena plainly said, “Leadership would not be different for me if I were a male.” She justified her thoughts sharing her personal upbringing in her family. She explained,

My family raised me, just like they did for my brothers. The things that surrounded me were also similar to theirs. About education also, I travelled abroad to study like a male family member. They believed in me and trusted me equally. (Deena, Interview 1)

Deena went on to say that she believes women are stronger than men balancing their family chores as well as work. She reiterated, “Leadership depends on the personality of the individual, I don’t think its male/female issue.” My field notes marked the struggles of a researcher. On one hand, I was prompting Deena was elaborate responses, and on the other hand, I was trying to keep my subjectivities to the minimum. I did not want to influence my thoughts on her and force her to share more (Field notes, March 2017).

“I did not know their [faculties] names before, but now I know their personalities.”

Deena believes that her leadership practices have changed a lot since she had started her leadership role. She explained that she feels more confident and stronger in her position now. She remarked, “Now, I am different.” Deena reflected back on her past solely as an Assistant professor without any leadership role and said that,

Before I was shy in meetings. We use to meet in many faculty and council meetings, I use to be quiet. I did not share my thoughts at all. I use to accept their opinions. In fact, I used to think that I am just teaching, and I need not bother about other issues. But if I was delegated any task, I carried it to my best. I had never thought about a leadership position for me. (Deena, Interview 1)

Deena brought in her religious faith here. She added, “This is what Allah had planned for me. When I was offered this leadership position, I took it as a challenge. I wanted to do my best.” She shared that her annual appraisals reflected lot of achievements about her. Her self-reflection

on her capabilities was boosted by gaining remarks such as “above expectations.” Deena added that such feedbacks are essential for leaders to grow.

Ultimately, Deena believes that her achievements are also the achievements of the department. She exclaimed, “We are a team, there were so many gaps we filled and so many problems we solved.” Deena also added that she was secluded and quiet during her faculty career, but after taking this leadership position, she knows all the faculties and this to her is very achieving. With a big smile on her face, Deena added that her department is one of the biggest in Doha University, and “I did not know their [faculties’] names before, but now I know their personalities.” This statement of Deena reflected her deep sense of satisfaction about knowing each of her faculty members personally and professionally. She also compared her perceptions of another faculty when she was an assistant professor to that of when she is a leader. Deena explained that before she underestimated herself and assumed all other faculty members far more superior than her. She said, “I use to see them as perfect.” With a little bit of sarcasm, Deena concluded, “I am much better and comparable to myself, rather than comparing with others.” My first interview ended with this conversation. I scheduled my next interview with Deena a week later. But Deena stressed on confirming the appointment a day before, because she thinks that anytime, there might be some unforeseen appointments that might change her schedule. With a positive note, my reflective diary marked that Deena, gradually seemed to elaborate her responses. She started to share her stories in a detailed manner. May be this was due to my increase in familiarity with her and we had developed a relationship of trust. However, for my other research participants: A’isha and Sara, they shared their stories in detail right from the beginning (Field notes, March 2017).

A week later, I met Deena on the scheduled date for my second interview around noon. This time it was in her other office in female section. Her office was located in a new building very far from the main entrance of Doha University. The infrastructure of the building was extremely overwhelming as I saw this new building. The shaded walkway led me to a huge glass door. I was struck by the student population, many of them in black robes, and some in colored costumes moving in and out of the building. The large food court was full of students some studying and some in deep conversations. I felt lost for a moment and then sought help from the security woman to guide me to Deena’s office. Deena’s office was on the first floor to my right

and it was located on the interior side of the building. The noises in the background seemed to be fading as I walked up the stairs. I met with Deena's new secretary at this campus who is also a secretary to another Head of the department in this building. Deena had not yet arrived for the meeting. I texted Deena about my arrival, and as I was waiting, I took the time to relax and prepare for my interview. Deena was prompt in responding back that she is on her way to this building from the male section. My reflection noted Deena as a challenging woman, leading a huge department of about 60 faculties as well as teaching and dealing with students' academic queries.

“The Islamic context of Qatar, does not have a significant influence on my leadership, but the culture has”

Deena arrived a few minutes late and led me to her office. It was a calm and quiet place. This office seemed to be seldom used and hence her desk and office was not holding much furniture. Unlike her other office, there were not any bookshelves. Deena allowed me to set my laptop for interview and note taking, while she grabbed her hot drink. With a quick recap of what we had discussed in previous interview, I asked Deena to present her perspectives on the influence of Qatari context on her leadership and decision-making. A confused expression shadowed her face and Deena asked several clarifications for this question. I explained Deena about the Islamic Sharia law as a legislative of Qatar and ways Qatar chooses to embed Islamic values into their education system. Deena then asked for further clarification if I am asking her opinion on the influence of Qatar's culture on her leadership. As a researcher, I wanted to hear her thoughts, and felt like she might begin to elucidate her thoughts as she is sharing. Deena keen to keep the culture and Islam separate here. She believed that, “the Islamic context of Qatar, does not have a significant influence on my leadership, but the culture has.” Upon my prompt to clarify her perspective on culture, she added, “not all Islamic values and principles can be practiced in our leadership, therefore, by culture I mean, what we practice here as a country has more impact on me.” My reflection noted that Deena seemed to be puzzled with this idea of influence of Qatari context in her leadership decision making. Her responses also mirrored some sense of uncomfortableness. I moved on with my next question with a note to come back to this question at a later time (Field notes, March 2017).

Revisiting the question.

Towards the end of my third and final interview with Deena, I posed the same question to Deena again, “Do you think the Islamic context of Qatar influences your decision making and leadership style?” I also expanded my question this time by prompting her to think back to the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his leadership style. Deena spontaneously quoted an Arabic verse from the Qu’ran, “Wa amrahum shura baynahum” which means, “and who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation” (Al Quran, 42:38). She further clarified that,

When I need to decide, I consult with my team. And of course, we follow Rasool Allah [Prophet Muhammad PBUH] not simply because he is the Prophet of Allah, but rather because we believe in him and we are convinced with him 100 percent. From my perspective, we don’t follow anything blind-folded. No... following with belief is ideal.

Deena went on to say that believing in practices of Muhammad (PBUH) is a different stance and implementing those in our leadership is another stance. I was moved by her response and wanted to hear more from her. Deena instead disputed me saying, “Can you say that everyone who steals, we can cut their hands? Of course, I agree with this 100 percent, but I can’t implement this.” This eye-opening statement from Deena emphasized her perspectives on drawing clear lines between one’s *beliefs* in Islamic practices versus the *implementation* of Islamic practices. Deena’s responses left me baffled, fighting with my inner self, as an insider being a Muslim myself certainly believing in the leadership of Muhammad (PBUH), I concluded that it is extremely important to consider the context of the situation and then make decisions (Field notes, March 2017).

Deena described that in her department there are various committees, each having different purpose and responsibilities. She said, when it comes to decision making, she always reaches the committee members for their opinions. The normal process is to consider each committee members’ opinion and then the majority opinions with acceptable reasoning for a particular scenario helps make the final decision. In certain cases, when there are equal votes on either side, the decision-making is escalated to the Dean of the college. Deena added that,

Since, our department is very big, we have many committees. And there is another committee called the decision-making committee, mostly with Heads of the departments,

of which I am a member. So, when discussing matters with equal voting, we leaders present our opinions and the Dean helps in finalizing.

Deena justified her thoughts continuing to say that consultation and *shura* process protects the leaders, such as the Heads of the department. She claims that, “this system is very good, and it is a protection for leaders. Any decision we make is by voting and the responsibility is shared. If there is any mistake there is no one person blamed for.” In this present age of accountability in work place, Deena felt secured and satisfied with this type of decision-making process (Field notes, March 2017).

“It is a personal thing and not linked to professional atmosphere”

Our interview went slow due my notetaking and Deena was patient and considerate about process. As she was sipping her hot drink, I followed up with Deena and asked her to share some leadership experiences as a female leader, both challenging and complementary stories. The first story she shared was a challenging experience. She narrated:

Maybe the problem I am facing now currently is with few other females, in this department. Moreover, for me this is a very big problem. Especially, those women with higher experience are a problem for me. I graduated from here [Doha University] and I served in the same department as a lab support and they have seen me progressing. I moved to a new workplace where I was honored, and they encouraged me for my graduate studies in Europe and funded my studies. I came back and worked as an Assistant professor for few years and then I became the Head of the department. (Deena, Interview 2)

Upon asking for elaboration as to why it is challenging with other females, Deena went on to say that my experiences are “not normal. It is abnormal actually. The problem that I am facing may not be experienced by other leaders in different situations.” At this point, Deena was clear that her experiences are unique to her and she does want to generalize it to other female leaders. She extended her conversation saying,

I am a very open-minded person. During the meetings, I consult with all faculty members to seek their opinions and we finally decide by voting. This is an open opportunity for all and those few female faculties present their opinions too. The funniest part is when I

agree with her opinion, she changes her opinion and when I do not agree with her opinion, it is completely different scenario. (Deena, Interview 2)

With laughter and sarcasm, Deena told that these types of attitudes are more of a “personal thing and not linked to professional atmosphere.” I witnessed Deena trying to convince herself, that the women who create problems for her within her department actually have personal problems with her due to her success, rather than with her leadership role itself (Field notes, March 2017).

In addition, Deena also narrated that leading a big team has presented her with many challenges as well as opportunities. She embraces diversity of the faculties from different geographical locations. However, Deena feels challenging to lead people of higher qualification than her. She explained, “Some faculty have so much experience that they might have served as even as the Dean of previous college they worked in and now they switch back to faculty positions.” Deena went on to clarify that she believes “a leader should know everything of everything” and people who have higher expertise and experience than her becomes a challenge for her. Using a trope; simile she compares “full professors” as “schools of knowledge.” She explained that since her department is a hub for different fields of sciences it is more challenging for her to know about each field. In Deena’s words,

This unit is like an umbrella. I must know what you do. I must give all the basics and my team needs to build on that and I must be aware and knowledgeable of about everything. This is the ideal situation. But here I do not know about everything, and I need to execute all the departmental functions, it is really challenging. (Deena, Interview 3)

Further, Deena conveyed that as a fresh Ph. D. graduate she feels inferior than full professors in the department. However, she takes this as a challenge and a new experience for herself. Confidently, she added that

It is a responsibility to lead people of more experience and expertise, from both academic and administrative angle. But I overcame this creating a culture of respect and practicing shura [consultation]. I try to communicate with them by all means. (Deena, Interview 3)

In this, Deena stated few important skills that she practices as a leader: creating a culture of respect, consulting with her team members for decision making that works best by

communicating her thoughts with other faculties. Moreover, Deena explained that delegation is also effective in her department. Since the department had many committees that is led by one of the members; the chair, Deena delegates the task to the chair and then the chair assigns the tasks to its committee members. She also added, that due to time constraints and lack of feasibility in each faculty's schedule, sometimes these committees meet virtually via exchanging emails and complete the assigned tasks. For Deena, accomplishing the tasks was a priority.

“You know as a female leader, I feel very supportive”

In a calm manner, switching from challenging experiences I reminded Deena to share any complementary leadership experiences. Instantly, Deena said: “you know as a female leader I feel very supportive. All the faculty members, except those few women, others are all very supportive.” I asked Deena for clarification, if the gender itself influences her leadership experiences, instead Deena justified it to be more due to her leadership style, her relationship and behaviors with her faculties. She narrated:

I encourage teamwork. I also encourage our department faculty to build societal relationships. So, I arrange for an informal lunch every semester and this gives an opportunity to de-stress and chill out. During this meeting we usually discuss students results but in an informal way. To build relationships beyond the professional settings, I also organize for family picnics. (Deena, Interview 2)

Deena believes in socialization and correlates it with productivity of work. To her, such informal meetings energizes faculties and helps reduce worrying. For Deena, this is one of her key leadership approaches that helps reduce work tension and builds friendly relationships. With these discussions, my interview ended, and Deena was all set to teach. I scheduled my final interview with Deena and it was just three days later. I reminded Deena to invite me for any of her professional meetings, and as always, she assured me to find a suitable one and inform me a day before.

On the other hand, Deena told me that many of her meetings are informal. Some faculty, admin staff, or students just walk in with their concerns and she said that it turns out to be a mini meeting. She told me that I am welcome to observe her in those meetings rather than the formal ones. Fortunately, I had such an opportunity to observe her informally during my second

interview. I will elaborate this further under the observations discussion towards the end of Deena's case study.

On another note, Deena also expressed her gratitude towards Qatar for supporting the Qatari nationals for their higher education. She shared her thoughts with mixed feelings that despite being a Qatari national, the university that she graduated with her bachelor's from, did not provide her with support for her graduate studies. In fact, it was other governmental organization that recognized her abilities and encouraged her to study abroad. Hence, Deena achieved her milestones and celebrated her success periodically.

“Although we were three different personalities, we were one in reality”

It was time for my final interview, and I met Deena in her office at the male campus. The month of March in Qatar is mid-summer where the heat waves keep gradually increasing. It was a Sunday, third week of March, I met Deena at 10 am. Deena was all set for the interview. With initial greetings and my update on my research progress, I started with a repeater prompt to share any of her memorable leadership experiences. After a short pause, Deena shared a memorable leadership experiences that was challenging and how she overcame that challenge.

Deena thought back to the time when she joined this position as the Head of the department. She said,

One of the most challenging time was this period when I took this position because there was no administrative person at all. I had to all secretarial work including carrying files to concerned places. Usually we use to have two admin secretaries and right now we have three, but that time there were none. There was no real handing over, you know. (Deena, Interview 3)

However, Deena acknowledged that the previous Head of the department was supportive. She was always available and to support. Deena said, “she [previous Head] was always there to help me, she answered all my queries and concerns.” In addition, Deena was optimistic about the tasks she was carrying out during this initial period. She stated that, “even taking the papers from one place to another was a good opportunity for me to see my team members, to talk to them, to know them and I do not have any hesitation doing that again.” This reflected Deena's personality as a humble and optimistic person.

Elaborating more on these initial leadership periods at Doha University, Deena remarked that not only she was new to the leadership; there were two more subject coordinators who were new at that time. Therefore, for Deena, teamwork did wonders. She quoted, “Although we were three different personalities, we were one in reality.” She confirmed that she believed in her team and had trust in them to carry out the tasks collaboratively.

For my final question to complete the statement, “Being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is like...,” Deena kept silent for few minutes. I felt like she needed to read this statement and passed on my interview questions hard copy. Deena read out the statement loud and said, “It’s not only a leader, it’s a female leader.” Unlike her response to one of my previous questions to elaborate on her experiences as a female leader where she believed that leadership is not different for males and females, this time Deena gave a completely contradicting response. Deena stated, “It’s not positive for a female. For a male, may be, for another female may be, but for me, my very personal life, it’s not.” Deena continued saying that,

Being a female leader is like working 16 out of 24 hours for me. It is like dedicating a whole life... my personal life to this work and this is affecting. I try my best to do time management, but I cannot do it. Because even midnight I am receiving emails. And matters are so crucial that I also respond to emails midnight. So we are all like a team working all the time. (Deena, Interview 3)

Deena was now sharing her concerns about the workload in her leadership role. She argued that she is not able to disconnect herself from work, “I just can’t switch off my mind.” In addition, Deena confirms that it is stressful when there is a huge work load. But she then clarifies that she is always willing to take up challenging tasks. It is not just about the workload, instead it is more about the nature and significance of the task required. She stated,

I do not mean that I do not want to do the work. I can do it but the work should be moving on without stress. But I do not want to focus on something that is not necessary. You know most of the work is marked important but not actually necessary. (Deena, Interview 3)

Upon asking for further clarification from Deena to elucidate this with an example, she said mostly, she receives many emails where faculty are trying to collect or provide evidences for the

tasks they are carrying out. She continued saying that, if there are any contradicting thoughts between the faculties, they tend to justify themselves with evidences, and this in turn adds on their work load and to hers as well. As a former leader myself, although in K-12 settings, I have witnessed such situations. Curious about this practice, I immediately asked a follow up question, whether this is a cultural practice in Qatar or particularly in educational settings to provide evidences. To this Deena spontaneously answered, “No,” because in her previous workplace as the head of projects, Deena did not face such situations. She also added that after the office hours she use to “switch off” from work and start fresh again the following day. She argued that the work culture is different in both settings.

Observations: Consultation, Teamwork, and Responsibility

As Deena could not find a suitable meeting for me to observe, I utilized her narration of how she runs a professional meeting to portray her leadership qualities and skills in such meetings. This section will serve as a substitute to non-participant observations. It was during my second interview that Deena explained one of her meeting’s scenario. She said that since she leads a department that has hosts several other departments under a big umbrella, there are various committees to execute the functions of the department. There are also subject coordinators in addition to these committees. She narrated a general committee meeting’s scenario. Deena elaborated that she chairs the meeting. Each committee has 12-15 faculty members and one of them serves as a leader for that committee. She explained that the agenda of the meeting is prepared few days before the meeting and the committee members receive the agenda via email. The faculties have the option to add any more points that they want to add to the agenda. A day before the meeting, the final agenda is sent to the faculties along with the minutes of the previous meeting. The meeting generally starts with the previous minutes displayed using a projector and all the members have to approve those minutes. After that, they begin with the agenda for the meeting. Each faculty takes turn to make the minutes of the meeting. Finally, towards the end of the meeting, she also gives opportunity for an open chance to discuss any of their concerns. She admits that sometimes faculty are very busy that they do not add their concerns to the agenda of the meeting or depending upon the necessity of a case, they discuss it during the meeting.

Deena again explained that the decision-making process is usually carried out by the voting process; however, the decision is finalized by her. In her words, “It is usually voting process. In case of critical decision making if the majority votes for some and if I feel that is not right, I can change it.” But she always makes sure to justify her reasoning behind it. Deena added that, “Firstly, I thank them for their suggestions, then I explain my reasoning, and finally we make the decision.” Upon asking for clarification, if this is what she practices as one of her leadership strategies, Deena responded that the whole college practices similar decision-making process. Deena elucidated that during the peak times of the year, especially the course add/drop period, the committees function more collaboratively. They all team up and do not wait for an official meeting to assign tasks and then execute. Rather, “we like to team up, gather and do the work,” Deena said. However, Deena also confirmed that as a leader she encourages teamwork not only during emergency times rather during all times.

Next, Deena explained that there are many meetings that are led by the coordinators. Since, there are many committees and within that sub-committees they meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Furthermore, she confirmed that due to the centralization process at Doha University, she as the Head of the department has to monitor the meetings and forward the minutes to the Dean’s office. Along the same lines, Deena sees this as a positive move that makes the faculty accountable. In her words, “It is good for them [faculty]. Before, they were not accountable for such meetings, now they are involved. This encourages team work.” Contrary, Deena also argued that such accountability and reporting has added extra work load to these faculties. She added, “these faculties are researchers. They need to focus on their teaching, read research papers, and update their curriculum. And this is what will contribute to the students’ development as well as to the community.” With a tinge of sarcasm, Deena concluded, “but now they are writing the minutes of the meeting.” To reduce the faculties’ workload Deena said that some of the committees requested her to function virtually and communicate via emails instead to which Deena agrees. She clarified that end of the day it is the output that matters to her and not the means of achieving it. She also shared her thoughts about her belief in her faculty. She said, “I do not care how they will do their work. Because I believe in them! I believe that they are the most intelligent, the most educated, and the most efficient in our community.” She explained that instead of setting the rules, she prefers to set the expectations for the faculty. Being available to the faculty for the feedback is always her

priority, Deena clarified. She also believes that she herself sets an example of teamwork and that helps her lead the team successfully. She added, “This is how I deal with people, I understand their needs. This is my personality and this is how I lead.”

Furthermore, Deena explained that she meets with the department coordinators on a daily basis unofficially and “we update ourselves on what’s happening in our sections, and that keeps me abreast of current activities.” Regarding the frequency and structure of the committee meeting, Deena stated that it is biweekly, however, they also meet with her without an appointment. Deena emphasized that she understands a faculty’s schedule and she believes in the open-door policy and welcomes her faculty and students. But at the same time she finds this policy challenging. Deena added that,

It is sometimes challenging because my door is open for students, faculties to address their individual concerns as well as committee concerns, to give advice, to help them in decision making, and sometimes even complete a pending issue then and there. Hence, when my free time is used up, my personal work gets piled up. (Deena, Interview 2)

Deena emphasized communication as one of the key strategies to help her execute her leadership activities. She further stressed her means of encouraging teamwork, is by making them responsible for their assigned tasks. She stated, “I don’t like to use *I*, instead I always communicate the tasks by using *we*, for instance, I say: We need to do this task, what is your plan to carry this out?” Deena went on to say this helps them create shared responsibility as well as empower them to share their opinions. She clarified that she also encourages her team to directly communicate with the Dean’s office for any of their tasks as far as she is aware of what is happening around. She recalled one of the events that her department was invited to host. Deena narrated,

I was invited by another institute within Doha University to collaborate and host a workshop. They came with their coordinators and we all had a meeting. We discussed and it was a specialty area of one of our sub departments. So, I gave the full authority to that coordinator to proceed and collaborate with this institute. At the same time, I monitor what is happening and I prefer to be marked CC on email communications pertaining to this workshop.

Therefore, Deena believed in empowering her team, but also used delegation as a strategy to assign suitable tasks depending upon the capacity of the faculty member.

I witnessed a short meeting of Deena during my second interview, where one of the secretary walked in to her room and clarified some of her concerns. I saw a dense conversation between the two and later Deena explained me the scenario. From her narration, I analyzed that Deena utilized her authority to help the faculty come out of a critical situation. This exhibited her leadership style to be adaptive to the situation and at the same time making use of her power to advocate for her team members.

Ultimately, I observed Deena to be a motivating team leader who encouraged teamwork and believed in her faculties the most. She also narrated the open-door policy to be challenging, however she also believed that the faculties are busy in their schedules and this would be the best way to accommodate their needs. Furthermore, she emphasized the priorities of a faculty to be involved in teaching and research rather than unnecessary paper work that does not contribute to the students' development. Deena's detailed explanation of professional meetings sufficed the need of observations; however, I always had a desire to officially observe any of her meetings to validate her narration (Field notes, March 2017).

Summary

Deena is an optimistic leader who has about twenty years of experience in the field of education that includes eight years of leadership experience in her profile. Deena works as the Head of department in one of the Universities in Qatar: Doha University. Doha University is a very big campus located in the heart of the Doha city and is one of the oldest Universities in Qatar that hosts many colleges. Deena's education is rooted in applied sciences and prior to this position as the Head of department, Deena served as a Head of projects section in another esteemed organization in Qatar. Deena has a Doctor of Philosophy degree in applied sciences. In addition to her leadership role, Deena also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at Doha University as an Assistant professor. I conducted three interviews with Deena that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. Unfortunately, no observations were done with Deena and this was substituted with one of the interview questions that summarized professional meetings in Deena's own words.

Like A'isha, Deena also believed in teamwork and collaborative leadership. Deena, raised with equal rights and responsibilities as her male siblings shared that leadership would not be any different if she were a male. However, she added that female leadership is much stronger than male leadership because of the family-life obligations women face alongside their professional work. Deena also reflected that her leadership has changed over many years in that it has improved a lot as she leads a group of diverse faculties and adapted her leadership styles depending upon the task and her faculties' needs. She explained that the Islamic context of Qatar does not have any influence in her leadership role; it is more due to her upbringing that she practices leadership in a certain way. However, she argued that the cultural context of Qatar is a challenge to her leadership. She elaborated on the tensions between misconceptions of culture and Islam. Her professional meetings reflection reiterated her leadership style as being an optimistic leader who overcame leadership challenges through her optimistic nature and teamwork.

Chapter 6: Leadership Stories: In their words...

Sara – “An ambitious leader communicating with minds”

Sara works in one of national research organizations in Qatar, Al Zaki research organization and has over 19 years of professional experience in education of which 12 years has been in a leadership position. Currently, Sara works as the head of the research department. In addition to this position, Sara is also an active community member who leads many social network groups addressing women's issues. I conducted two face-face interviews with Sara that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. My final interview that comprised of sharing her leadership experiences turned out to be a written response from Sara via email due to her unavailability to meet in person. With Sara also, the interview question framed to understand the professional meeting's scenario substituted the real non-participant observations.

Sara was a friendly, smart, and polite leader. After our initial communication via e-mails, I scheduled to meet Sara during the third week of March. Sara's office was located in one of the busiest places in Doha. It was near the corniche where there are a series of high-rise buildings; mostly hotels, office towers, government offices, and commercial buildings. Being aware of the traffic during the peak hours in the morning in Doha, I arrived for the meeting well ahead of time. Half of this tower was fitted with transparent glass doors on the ground floor. Many professionals: Qataris and expatriates were moving in and out of the building. As I entered into the building, there was a security desk to my right, where I enquired about Sara's office. The procedure was to present my Qatar identity card that was swapped with an entrance permit card labelled with Sara's office name to enter this building. This building was a hub for many offices and Sara's office was at the second floor.

Sara had called me to meet at a café inside this building where her office is also located. As Sara had advised to text me when I arrive, I did so and went to the café. A server welcomed me in the café and I sat in a place from where I got a beautiful sight of the corniche. The café was not very busy, just a woman behind me and two men on another table opposite to me. It was only minutes after I had texted Sara that I arrived the café. I was wondering, how I will identify Sara. Just then, I received a call from an unknown number and it was Sara. I could hear the voice from behind and the woman sitting behind was none other than Sara. With smiles, I

moved to Sara's table and we both introduced ourselves. The aroma of fresh coffee and the flavor of bakery items was spread in the air of the café. Ordering our cold drinks, I began to explain my research.

Sara had presented her consent to participate in my research in our initial communications via email. Since, this was our first meeting; I thought of presenting my research to Sara and then schedule our follow-up interviews. However, Sara was all set for her first interview in the café itself. With great excitement, I quickly turned on my recorder. The people at the café and the light background music was not affecting my interview by any means. Sara was focused in her responses.

“Those people who do not know what they really want cannot lead”

From Sara's perspectives, a leader ought to know what he/she really desires for in his/her leadership role. Sara was explaining the need of a leader to have a clear vision to lead their team. She added that famous quote of “Leaders are born or made,” but also argued that some people have both: the traits, talents, and skills and the experience. Still she confirms, “Those people cannot lead because they do not know what they really want, and all experience and talent will do no good here.”

Sara asserted that she is a leader who communicates with “minds of the people.” Sara explained that as a leader she aims to understand the minds of the people to begin with. She argues that her leadership needs to be changed according to the minds of the people. “It's really about the minds of the people you are dealing with,” Sara asserted. Furthermore, she narrates that a person may be a very good leader who understands his/her responsibilities perfectly, but she argues that a leader will not be able to succeed if he/she does not have to ability to communicate with the minds.

Sara also emphasized the education initiatives of Qatar contributes to raising great leaders. She argued that the education is more comprehensive now and it educates a person as a whole, especially the Qatar foundation that brought many changes to improve the education system in Qatar. In Sara's words,

They [Qatar foundation] are really working to educate a person, not just to give a position. In other organizations, one may be a director and just completed high school.

But in Qatar foundation, they are working with the minds of the people. (Sara, Interview 1)

On the other hand, Sara expressed her concern about a huge gap that exists in Qatar's community. She argued that in one organization there is leadership that empowers its employees for their personal and professional growth and in some organizations, "There are people who do not know to communicate in English, but they have the leadership skills and position also. Yet, they do not empower others." Therefore, Sara emphasized the skills and qualities gap between organizations. Furthermore, Sara stressed on the schooling and education system in Qatar. She complained that students graduating from international private schools have a higher skill set than those graduating from independent school system, hence "creating a huge gap between those minds." She continued to say that,

When this gap is started from the school system itself, it continues to maintain in the Qatari environment, and this is a big problem for the country to prosper. Qatar foundation especially has a great vision to reach the highest of each human potential, but if they don't link these gaps it results in leadership failure. (Sara, Interview 1)

Hence, for Sara, it was crucial for leaders to find ways to bridge such skills gap. As a leader, Sara believes in communicating with minds of the people. She advocates that everyone must learn from best practices of their ancestors that will also help in enriching the history of the country. She believes communication is a key to success. Explaining her workplace scenario, Sara said, "As a small country we need to communicate all the success as well as failure stories to learn." She expands on this stating that when similar situation arises in any other institution people can implement already proven strategies. She also believes that only when there is communication, opportunities open up and paves the way to success. She argued that, if there is no communication between the community, there will not be any development.

"I believe it [female leadership] is much stronger than male leadership."

While Sara was sipping her drink, I moved on and posed my next question on what it means for her to be a female leader. Sara immediately responded, "I believe it is much stronger than male leadership." She claimed women have the ability to multi-task, which many males do not have. She clarifies her perspective and narrates her childhood stories and her upbringing in

Qatar. She believes that as a norm, girls are brought up in such a fashion that they learn many skills and talents. Contrary, she argues, “boys in the GCC or Arab states do not have such experiences.” In Sara’s words,

In my own family for instance, we are 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Usually, the men have less to do and the women have more to do. I mean if you are a girl, the society expects you to do more and if you are boy, you are in the safe place. Boys spend their time in playing and for fun, whereas girls are trained new skills, such as sewing, baking, cooking, etc.

(Sara, Interview 1)

Therefore, Sara believes that right from raising the children, gender has its influence. Sara further, asserts that it is not only in her family, but it is engrained in the culture. In addition, she said that when girls in their early teens gained all such skills shows that they are powerful and independent. She argued that right from childhood when girls’ minds are occupied, and they are highly skilled, they have the dream, an initiative to pursue many dreams in their lives. Contrary, Sara said, “If you shut the minds, many of them end up not having a vision for themselves.” Sara explained that education is not the only factor to have a clear vision. She stated that her ancestors did not know to read or write, yet they were successful people. In her words,

He used thumb impression for his signature, but he knew what he wanted. He was clear with his ideas... All of his family members work along the same lines and they know his vision and strategies to achieve it.

This reiterates Sara’s argument for a leader to have a clear vision to achieve their set goals. She explains that it is not really the skills or the experiences that helps a person achieve their goal, but rather having a clear vision helps gain the skills and experiences to achieve their target. She believed in setting up clear goals and once achieving a goal, she sets the next challenging goal for her development.

“I believe that if you do not have any obstacles, you will not refine your personality.”

Sara was not only clear and ambitious; she was also a reflexive person. Upon my prompt to share her perspectives on whether her leadership practices have changed from the time she started her job until now, after a short pause Sara narrated her experiences. She stated:

I have learnt a lot from my mistakes. I have learnt a lot from the obstacles that I've faced. I was promoted in my leadership position in a very short time frame. Some of my friends are still in the same position they started. I believe that if you do not have any obstacles, you will not refine your personality.

Moreover, Sara clarified that an individual must always find their own ways for their personal and professional development. She explained that she does not wait for any person to pave her the way to success, rather, Sara said, "I seek for opportunities and I try to find what will help for my growth as well as for the organization." She clarified that she does not focus on the designation/title of the position, but she is more concerned about achieving her set targets by any means. She asserted, "I have faced a lot of obstacles and this makes me Sara, really! But for me, still there is no end to my growth." Sara stressed that once she achieves her first goal, she has the next target ready for her to work. In addition, that describes her personality as a leader, she remarked.

Sara consolidated her thoughts and added more to her definition of leadership. She posited, "Leadership includes achievement." Therefore, to summarize her leadership style from the time she started in this position, Sara explained that when she equates leadership with achievement, her leadership is successful. "My end goal is to achieve the target," Sara claimed. She clarified that it is not really about the leadership style, it is instead about how a leader can make their employees achieve their goals. Sara also argued that it is challenging to deal with people. Sometimes, people do not want to develop in their careers and this is challenging. However, Sara believed in people who have a desire to grow, who have the initiative within to achieve, and who are determined to succeed. In Sara's words, "There are some people who just need a position and title, but they do not want to work hard. There are some people who work hard, but they are moody, so I need to have lot of styles." Hence, leadership should be adaptive depending on the individual and the situation to achieve set targets, Sara explained.

It was the first working day in the last week of March, 2017; I met with Sara for my second interview. This time Sara, invited me to her office. Reaching there ahead of time to pass through the security process, I reach Sara's office on the second floor. Exiting the elevator, Sara's office was the corner most room on my left. The security led me to her room and Sara was ready for the interview. Her room was very well furnished. Her office desk looked

professional with many stationary and on the front, were a couple chairs for visitors with a center table holding some magazines. Behind her desk was a cupboard holding some files and books. There was a round meeting table to the left corner just a few steps away from the windows. It was a wonderful sight from there and the streets were busy near the corniche. Sara preferred the meeting table for our interview and quickly I set up my recorder and laptop for notetaking. I started my interview with a question on Qatar's Islamic context and its influence on her leadership style.

“Culture operates under the disguise of Islam, and that’s not the truth.”

Sara seemed to be very open and clear with her thoughts. To the question of influence of Qatar Islamic context on her leadership style, Sara argued that, “We have more of cultural influences, rather than the Islam itself.” Here, Sara was presenting her opinions generally and not framing it in her leadership context. She narrated,

We have a lot of freedom for women in Islam, but it’s not allowed in our country, by the people, I mean. For instance, I wanted to be a television host for a program that helps entrepreneurs understand the process and obstacles in setting up their own business. But, I was not accepted because it is culturally not feasible for a woman to work in such fields. That is why I mean it is not related to Islam, but it is more of cultural practices. Islam supports women and if we follow it, it will be beneficial for all. (Sara, Interview 1).

With a follow-up question, I politely asked Sara to share with me her perspectives on the influence of Qatari Islamic context in her leadership. To this Sara, reiterated that Islam has nothing to do with the work or professional spheres. She argued,

Once you are following halal and haram, there is nothing further to do. I can be very good in my work. I am just working under the Islamic ruler. But once the culture interacts with Islam, this becomes an issue.

From Sara's perspectives, she said that in the professional spheres following the basic principles of Islam such as halal and haram suffices the need. She shared a short snippet to justify her reasoning. She continued to say that in order to get her salary, she needs perform her duties to the best. She argued, “I cannot come to work and do nothing and simply take my salary. I have

to work and then get paid, else it is haram.” Then she explained that some people still come to work and are not productive, so this is not Islamic, but a cultural practice.

Sara shared an example elaborating her perspectives on cultural and Islamic context. She narrated that in the past it was challenging for her to travel alone for her business trips. She clarified that it was about five years ago, but now it is gradually changing. Sara continued that she is witnessing a change in community’s perspectives in this regard. Yet, she argues that there is a lot more to change. Sara argued, “In our country, still there is no female minister, I think long back there was one female leader. But she did not have the true leadership authority to execute leadership actions, and this is because of our culture, not Islam.” Finally, for Sara, culture itself was a huge barrier to female leadership because she argued, “Culture operates under the disguise of Islam, and that’s not the truth.” Contrary, Sara clarified that Islam actually empowers and supports her to do her best. Sara argued that Islam teaches her to perform her leadership roles. She quoted some Islamic leaders’ names such as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Batuta who were great leaders and said that many leaders irrespective of their religion have inspired her. She also quoted Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King to name a few. Her leadership approach was to advocate for your rights, but never clash with other people.

Sara suggested that it would be better to rephrase my question by replacing the Qatar’s Islamic context influence to cultural influence instead. With surprise, I quickly highlighted this on my laptop while making notes for further reflection. That evening while writing my field notes, I concluded that probably Sara did not capture the main essence of my question. Her distinction between Islamic influence and cultural influence was genuine; however, my question was to know about her leadership experiences with Qatar as a context and Islam as the legislative law (Field notes, March 2017). As a researcher, during the interview it was difficult to interrupt Sara and clarify this. With this reflection, I marked to revisit this question in future interviews. This time Sara presented her opinion on how Qatar as a country is supportive to its citizens. She explained that Qatar before five years was a different place, and now it is far ahead. Sara added that Qatar is empowering its citizens to join the labor market. Qatar is also hosting many leadership programs for potential Qataris to excel. And this for Sara has made her achieve her ambitions and dreams. Sara explained she is a visionary person and had dreamt of many steps for her career long ago. However, it was not feasible to be executed in the past. But, “now as the

country is developing, the culture itself changes and people's minds also change," exclaimed Sara. She went on to say that the development of the country especially after the Qatar National Vision 2030, it helped Sara paint her future as she had once envisioned. In her words,

Before, when I use to think of doing something, I was not able to do because there were no such opportunities, neither in my work place nor in my country itself. Not even in my education. But now things have changed. We have different platforms to acquire knowledge, and if you have a plan to study abroad, that is also easy these days. Now, I see my vision taking shape maturely hoping to reach my targets easily.

In addition to being thankful to Qatar, Sara also wishes that her country becomes a democratic nation. Ultimately, she narrowed down her thoughts saying that in her opinion implementing what you preach is important. Sara clarified, "For instance, if Qatar would practice democracy, it should practice it to the fullest and if Qatar is practicing the Sharia law, it should do justice to that as well." Similar to Deena, Sara also narrated an example of an Islamic law to penalize the thieves by cutting their hands. She believes it is hard to implement this. Therefore, she argued that Sharia should not be changed and use the Sharia as it is.

"I believe Qatar gives us really good support."

Sara shared her leadership experiences being a female leader and she thinks her experiences are mostly challenging; nevertheless, Sara perceives some of those experiences in a complementary fashion. To begin with, Sara explained that she desperately wanted to earn her master's degree many years ago. But that time the culture was different that did not let Sara to study. She further explained that she was a married woman then, yet it was not easy for her. She clarified that, "usually, it is believed that a married lady has more space than the one who is not." Sara earned her master's degree recently and she acknowledges Qatar's contribution in achieving her goals. As explained earlier, Sara believed that as the country progressed to achieve its Qatar National Vision 2030, it created many opportunities for its citizens. In her words,

Once the government was open, my professional organization was supporting me for my studies because of our QNV 2030. That gave me a good chance to earn my degree. After 5 years of wait, I earned me degree in a very short span once the doors were open for me.

I think if the opportunities were there before itself, I would have earned my Ph. D. by now. (Sara, Interview 2)

With mixed emotions, Sara concluded that because of the cultural values it took so long for her to achieve her dreams. However, she was glad that once the country started to progress well, the society also developed really well. She added that, “once the government had its own vision, which is really very wide, helps bridge many other gaps and that itself gave a huge link to build the community.” Sara, was also reflecting as she was talking and refined her thoughts stating “May be this [QNV 2030] serves the best for the people who are looking forward to achieve. There are so many of my friends who have leadership skills and qualities, yet they do not utilize it.” Sara thought that this might also be due to the personalities itself and whether or not people have a vision to achieve their dreams. Nevertheless, “I believe Qatar gives us really good support,” Sara exclaimed.

“There are a few obstacles, but now the work is a lot easier.”

Sara, narrated one of her challenging experiences that she perceived as a complementary one once she started to navigate the process. Sara recalled her days when she started her leadership position at Al Zaki. Sara explained that there were not clear guidelines and procedures to be followed in the research department at Al Zaki. It was not clear how the department used to function. It needed revamping the vision for the department. She felt stuck as all the employees were following their daily routines without any clear guidelines. Sara went on to say,

That time it was very hard to start my leadership role without any clear idea of how the department is functioning. I decided to frame the guidelines and procedures, which is a time-consuming job, but I achieved it with the help of my team members collaboratively. It was setting up guidelines that match our work. It was making the daily routines accurate. (Sara, Interview 2)

Sara’s narration displayed her qualities of seeking perfection and accuracy in the tasks she carried out. She added that since one of her job responsibilities was to evaluate the efficiency and impact of her department, she needs to make sure that the assigned tasks are clear; there is no duplication of work. She added that this clarity in work removed many obstacles. Yet, “there

are a few obstacles, but now the work is a lot easier.” She explained that initially there was not any team and she just worked under her supervisor’s guidance. But later she formed a team of 4 members and executed the tasks efficiently. Sara narrated one of the strategies she deployed while executing this task. She said,

I used to find out where the issue is and how I can solve this problem. I jolt down who is related to this work. I then call for a meeting and learn from them about the obstacles they face from their daily routines. I seek suggestions from all members. Although, it is not directly related to my research department, I believed to execute any tasks Al Zaki works as a whole and I need to sort out their issues as well. Therefore, upon consultation, I finalize my thoughts and send it to the superiors for approval. (Sara, Interview 2)

Sara’s strategy was similar to A’isha’s problem-solving strategy where she found out the core cause and then sought for solutions. Sara also explained that although her team seems to be small with 4 members, Al Zaki comprises of 60 members totally. She added that sometimes, depending on the tasks some other departments’ members also reach out to her for help and seek her advice.

Furthermore, insightful Sara explained that her approach of communicating with minds is a key leadership strategy. She argued that in order to empower her team members, Sara ought to communicate with their minds. She believes that she needs to know her employees in person so that she can understand their needs so that it helps her achieve her work targets. Her perspective on maintaining some distance between employees as well as maintaining keeping the friendships and personal life separate from work was a priority. She explained that, “an individual who keeps the two separate is a determined person and know what they want to achieve at work.” Further, for Sara it was easy to trace such minds and work with them. She stated,

It is more about how the minds are working, and maybe I have the ability to measure the needs of their minds and I know what will help them. So, I adapt my leadership according to their needs. (Sara, Interview 2)

Hence, Sara believes that communicating with mind is crucial to understand the needs of the team members and adapt her leadership style.

“It’s not about me that gave her the strength, but it is more about the words that helped in communicating me with her mind.”

From her community leadership Sara narrated one of her leadership experiences and explained her style of communicating with the minds of the people. She recalled one of the meetings that they had a month ago where one of the social networking group of mothers met in person. She said that one of them reported to everyone that she is suffering from a mild cancer. To this, all the members reacted and consoled her. Instead, Sara preferred to maintain silent at that time. Later, after the meeting Sara communicated with her over phone. She said,

I called her because I believed that she wanted me to communicate through her mind.

And that was my approach to remind her of her goals and initiatives so that she can force herself to fight the cancer, instead of being to victim to it. I motivated her that she can defeat the cancer easily. (Sara, Interview 2)

Sara went to say that towards the end of the conversation that woman seemed to be a different person. Sara added that, “It’s not about me that gave her the strength, but it is more about the words that helped in communicating me with her mind.” Finally, Sara connected her idea of communicating with minds to several other concepts that she already discussed. She explained that with the help of communication, gaps can be bridged that will empower other people.

For my final question, to complete the statement, “Being a female leader in Qatar in the field of higher education is like...,” Sara took some time to really grasp this statement well and responded after a short pause. She explained that for me “it is to have non-stop ambitions.” Sara was again grateful to her country for creating opportunities that paved ways for her success. She reiterated that it always depends on the personality and how they perceive things. She added, “Sometimes, people say I am facing so and so issue in my country whereas other people do not see this as an issue itself. So, it depends on how each person sees things.”

Although, I had completed all my interview questions with Sara, in two interview sessions, I wanted to utilize the opportunity of my third interview as well to elaborate on her leadership experiences and develop an in-depth narrative case study (Field notes, March 2017). However, the last interview turned out to be via email communication in a written format response. This particular question was revisited in the last interview to which Sara gave a

slightly different response, yet the overarching theme was the same. She stated, “Being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is like *fighting for reliable changes*.” Analyzing Sara’s case study as a whole, I believe Sara is a visionary leader who believes in communicating with minds and achieving set targets with clear guidelines and procedures.

Observations: Communication, Empowerment, and Accountability

Unfortunately, Sara was also hesitant to invite me to her professional meetings. However, she assured me to invite to one of her community meetings. Unfortunately, that did not happen either, and I relied on the interview question on the description of meetings to substitute the observations. She helplessly stated,

It is a sensitive issue actually. Since, my department is restructuring now, there are many people I meet and some of them I meet for the first time. Some are also executive directors. So, it is really challenging for me to bring you in for an observation. (Sara, Interview 2)

Being optimistic as a researcher myself, I took full advantage of the interview question to describe her professional meetings. I requested Sara to explain her leadership scenarios in both professional and community settings (Field notes, March 2017).

Sara began to explain that the structure of the meetings depends upon the purpose of meeting itself. She clarified that in her department she holds meetings for different purposes such as; for brainstorming, for consultation, for content development, for decision making and so on. Therefore, the agenda of the meeting depended on the purpose of the meeting. However, a day before the meeting, the agenda is set and sent to all the team members explaining which member will be dealing with what topic on the agenda. Sara assured that usually, she delegates the task to other team members as she believed in empowering her team. The number of people in the team also depends on the purpose and type of meeting, she explained. Sara added, “If there is an emergency issue for my research team, only the research team meets. But, if there is a need for all the members of Al Zaki to meet, then we all meet.” These meetings also provided a platform to know the members of the organization and facilitates communication between members, Sara exclaimed.

For instance, Sara narrated a scenario of a decision-making meeting and said that she respects all her team members' opinions. So usually, she presents the task or an issue that needs a decision to be made to her team members. Then she waits to hear their perspectives and finally she presents her options as well. Following that, a voting process is carried out and depending upon the majority votes, a decision is made. Sara further added that as a leader she is always keen to know the perspectives of the people who did not agree to the current decision. So that, if there are any amendments needed it can be combined with the current decision. This shows Sara's reflective personality as a leader. Sometimes, if any other member is seeking help for their issues, they lead the meeting and create a clear presentation that explains the issue and what strategies they have planned for. Following this, the usual voting process takes place. Sara added that sometimes such meetings require two sessions. Therefore, they meet again. She clarified that usually the department functions as a team, so addressing one concern means that they are addressing the whole team.

Explaining her leadership role in the community social groups, Sara explained that she has a friends' circle that join the group. The purpose of the group is to share their success stories, their expertise in any field, as well as their concerns if anyone needs help in any particular area. There are around 40 members in the group and she sets the guidelines to be a part of the group. For example, Sara emphasized that she is very particular about the members being active and posting learnable stuff in the group. Sara monitors the group and organizes events or workshops based on the needs of the group members. Furthermore, Sara also invites people from a variety of expertise to join the group that would help meet the needs of the group. Sara clarifies that she does not lead all the workshops but invites expert people to address the issue. In her words, "If anyone needs a workshop on psychological counselling, I prefer to call an expert in that field who will be a good role model."

Sara, also connected her leadership strategy of connecting with minds in her community building settings as well. She explained that many mothers contact her personally to talk to their teenage girls who needed some personal advice for behavioral concerns. Sara's approach in meeting with young minds is to empower them in the best possible way. She explained,

I know I can communicate with their minds and understand them. I can help them make their own decisions. I just listen to them and probe them to be critical in their thoughts and they will have their own solutions.

Therefore, Sara's strategy was to empower others by communicating with them and help them reflect on the issue themselves and find suitable solutions. Sara believed that it is always better for the person facing the issue to decide as it adds an accountability factor to the task. She added that people tend to be more dedicated and committed to their decisions if we involve them in the decision-making process.

Summary

Sara is a friendly, smart, and polite leader. Sara works in one of national research organizations in Qatar, Al Zaki research organization and has over 19 years of professional experience in education of which 12 years has been in a leadership position. Currently, Sara works as the head of the research department. In addition to this position, Sara is an active community member who leads many social network groups addressing women's issues. I conducted two face-face interviews with Sara that lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. My final interview that comprised of sharing her leadership experiences turned out to be a written response from Sara via email due to her unavailability to meet in person. With Sara too, the interview question framed to understand the professional meeting's scenario was substituted for real non-participant observations.

Sara is an ambitious leader who believed in communication with the minds of people as a leader. She is a leader who believed in having a clear vision of what one would like to pursue and argued that a person who does not have a dream or vision cannot lead. She explains that women are multitasking and portray a strong leadership as compared to that of men. Sara was very ambitious and optimistic too; she argued that obstacles create learning opportunities and enhance one's personalities. Sara echoed Deena's thoughts arguing about the cultural pressure that operates as a disguise of Islam. Sara is also a community leader who leads women's organizations that also centers on youth empowerment. She thanks Qatar for the constant support she received for her higher education. She also appreciates QNV 2030 that is transforming Qatar drastically and in turn uplifting the whole community. Her narration of professional meetings portrayed Sara as a leader who dedicates her leadership to empowerment

of her team through transparent communication and making all members accountable for their tasks. Ultimately, Sara leans more towards a visionary leader who believes in communicating with minds of people and achieving set targets with clear guidelines and procedures.

Chapter 7: Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

In the preceding three chapters, “Leadership stories: In their words...” I presented three individual case studies. A’isha, Deena, and Sara; each leader led in their own ways, yet they all shared some common leadership experiences. Those common experiences are analyzed in this chapter to provide a more detailed account of their leadership experiences from an Islamic leadership perspective. I considered the three leadership stories, their case studies together, to elucidate key themes, and reflect on them with regards to Islamic leadership literature with a specific focus on Padela’s (2015) Islamic leadership emergent model. Drawing from Padela’s Islamic leadership model derived from the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the first section of this chapter discusses the nature of female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar. The second section presents the additional themes that emerged from this study and is broadly categorized as supports and challenges female leaders face in their leadership position in higher education in Qatar.

I draw upon the detailed accounts from the three individual leadership stories; the case studies developed from my semi-structured interviews, observations, and field notes. Keeping in mind the nature of my study, it being a narrative inquiry, the purpose was to explore female leadership stories by hearing from them in an in-depth manner. This was accomplished with general open-ended questions on leadership to know about their leadership experiences rather than multiple-choice questions as in a survey method or specific questions focused on Islamic leadership. The purpose of my study was to examine their natural leadership experiences and then analyze it within the framework of Islamic leadership. The literature review presented a detailed summary of some prominent researches in the field of Islamic leadership. The definition of Islamic leadership I adapted from Aabed (2006), Rost (1991), and Beekun and Badawi (1999) encompasses many critical dimensions of leadership such as the communication between the leader, followers, and the situation and perceiving leadership as a trust. My cross-case analysis found many overlapping themes such as communication, vision, acknowledging follower capacity and so forth confirming the convergence of leadership definition from the literature to that of the female leaders’ perception. Instead of developing a separate section, these

themes are elaborated in this section where I analyze the leadership stories in the light of Padela's Islamic educational leadership model.

Several themes emerged initially, however, upon secondary coding; some themes appeared to be sub-themes that were collapsed under the main theme. For instance, at the outset, "team work," and "support," were separately classified, but a closer reading of the data disclosed that a more appropriate theme would be "collaborative leadership." Further, in order to build up a more in-depth analysis of Qatari female leadership in higher education, their leadership experiences; many themes that were relevant only to one or two leaders are also discussed in this chapter. Since, narrative inquiry is not about generalizing these leadership experiences, each of their leadership stories was considered relatively important. Hence, few themes remained as separate themes being prominent data in all three leadership stories such as "empowering others," "adaptive leadership," to name a few. Furthermore, besides the female Islamic leadership themes there are many additional themes. However, these themes fell into one overarching theme as leadership support system and challenges.

The two main overarching themes are: (1) Female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar that encapsulates a combination of personalized leadership, adaptive leadership, and faith-based leadership, (2) Leadership support system and challenges that highlighted internal and external support along with few leadership challenges. The first theme had six sub-themes: (a) personalized leadership; (b) treatment of people; (c) adaptive leadership; (d) relation with God and humanity; (e) fidelity to God and his prophet; and (f) developing a faith-based identity. Each of these themes has several sub-themes as explained in detail under theme I of this chapter. The first three sub-themes reflected general leadership behaviors whereas the next three sub-themes specifically addressed the Islamic leadership perspective. The second overarching theme "leadership support system and challenges" also has several sub-themes as explained under theme II of this chapter. Noteworthy is that Padela's (2015) Islamic educational leadership framework presented these similar themes through his analysis of a religious text in two different conceptual categories: modeling and directing behaviors and developing a theocentric worldview (See tables 2 & 3). However, for my research, I merge these two categories as I find considerable overlap between these two categories and call it as female Islamic educational leadership in higher education in Qatar. In what follows, I present and analyze their leadership

practices in light of Islamic educational leadership, and the support and challenges they face as female leaders in the field of higher education in Qatar by using examples from their case studies and references from the literature.

Theme I- Female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar: personalized leadership, adaptive leadership, and faith-based leadership.

My cross-case analysis draws from Padela's Islamic leadership research in K-12 school settings in Michigan (2015). I reiterate Padela's (2015) two main categories that portrayed Islamic leadership from his extensive analysis of a standard textbook of Hadith, *Riyad al-Salihin*: 1) Modeling and directing behaviors, and 2) motivating followers to a theocentric worldview. Upon extensive analyses of these Hadith, "Modeling and directing behaviors" was identified as first core category that highlights the leadership behavior of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The second main category Padela (2015) emphasized was to develop an Islamic Educational Leadership model to aid school leaders within Islamic schools in the United States. However, in this study, I implement this model for the first time in the field of higher education, that too in a different context: Qatar. Table 2 and 3 in the literature review section reveals both the findings.

Using the main themes that Padela (2015) developed in his Islamic educational leadership framework under both conceptual categories, my cross-case analysis found six themes by merging these two categories. Table 7.1 below presents these six themes in addition to the sub-themes under each of these themes. Padela's Islamic educational leadership model is embedded in the theocentric worldview or in Islamic terms, a *tawhid* centered model. Since the interview questions were open-ended and were focused to extract female leadership narratives in higher education in Qatar, these themes emerged from their leadership narratives that my interviews and/or observations witnessed in one, two or all of the three leaders. To analyze the theocentric part of their leadership practice, during the secondary coding, I analyzed their leadership narratives critically looking for a connection to Islamic leadership behaviors and principles in their leadership roles as laid out by Padela (2015).

Table 7.1

Female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar

| Main themes (From Padela, 2015) | Sub-themes (From Cross-case analysis) |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Personalized leadership | Visionary Delegation Emphasis on task Responsibility Role Modeling |
| 2. Treatment of People | Empowerment Relationship based on trust and respect |
| 3. Adaptive leadership | Follower capacity |
| 4. Relationship with God and humanity | Collaboration Communication Consultation |
| 5. Fidelity to God and His prophet | Awareness to reflect Concept of Halal and Haram Aakhirah ¹⁷ |
| 6. Developing a faith-based identity | Empowerment Societal gatherings Community leadership |

Note: Adapted and modified from Padela, A. I. (2015). *A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership behaviors: A Model for Islamic School Principals*. Doctoral dissertation. Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243.

Padela (2015) identified four main themes: personalized leadership; relationship with God and humanity; treatment of people; and adaptive leadership under the conceptual category of modeling and directing behavior. He identified some properties connected to each of these

¹⁷ Afterlife

themes and then found some leadership behaviors corresponding to each of these properties as seen in tables 2 and 3 explained in literature review. In my analysis, I do not address these properties and behaviors separately; rather, I found the sub-themes directly connecting to the main themes. According to Padela (2015), the first theme, personalized leadership had two main properties: leadership roles in both personal and professional settings and role modeling. My leadership stories' cross case analysis revealed several leadership practices aligned with this core theme of personalized leadership. I found themes such as being a visionary leader, delegating tasks appropriately, their emphasis on tasks displaying their commitment to leadership, their leadership responsibility, and role modeling.

The second theme, treatment of people had three main properties: promoting gentleness, promoting justice, and promoting the welfare of the weak. The themes that emerged from my cross-case analysis were empowering their team members, creating a culture of respect, a relationship based on trust, and being readily available for feedback. The theme empowerment was found to be a recurring theme aligning with the category of developing a faith-based identity when implementing Padela's Islamic educational leadership model to my data. The third theme adaptive leadership had a property of follower potential (Padela, 2015). This aligned perfectly well with the theme: concern for follower capacity and adaptive leadership style from my cross-case analysis.

The fourth theme relationship with God and humanity presented the dual property of devotion to God and concern for followers as two properties. Themes such as collaboration, communication, and consultation aligned under this category of displaying concern to the followers. Although, there was not a direct inference of devotion to God theme in the interview data, some religious utterances thanking Allah (SWT) during the interviews with simple gestures such as SubhanAllah¹⁸ and Alhamdulillah¹⁹ could be justified as these leaders' devotion to God in their leadership role. However, it should be noted that this is my perspective as a researcher. This analysis is not based on any direct questions that evaluated these leaders' devotion to God in their leadership practices.

¹⁸ May He be glorified and exalted.

¹⁹ All praise is due to Allah.

The fifth theme, fidelity to God and His Prophet (PBUH) had two main properties such as one's active reflection on their deeds and belief in the precedence of the afterlife (Padela, 2015). From my cross-case analysis, I found three main themes such as awareness to reflection, their understanding of the concept of halal and haram, and belief in aakhirah, that is the afterlife aligning to the theme of fidelity to God and His Prophet (PBUH). Finally, the sixth theme: developing a faith-based identity had four main properties ummah, familial ties, social responsibility, preventing harm (Padela, 2015). Empowerment, societal gatherings, community leadership were the sub-themes revealed from my cross-case analysis under the main theme of developing a faith-based identity.

I note that the interview questions were general leadership questions that were open-ended (See Appendix- A) and did not specifically focus on analyzing Islamic female leadership practices, rather, this study focused on studying female leadership narratives in higher education in Qatar as an Islamic context. Later, I analyzed the data under Padela's Islamic leadership framework. Hence, my preliminary and secondary coding revealed more information related to the first three themes portraying these female leaders' leadership behaviors and styles whereas the last three themes aligned with their theocentric Islamic leadership worldview. Noteworthy, is that some of these sub-themes are in-depth whereas some of the sub-themes are just on surface level. However, I believe presenting these themes is important to notice that either female leaders are beginning to think about these theocentric worldviews or this may infer that they are hesitant to talk deeply about religious matters. Hence, this can be viewed from two ways: as a limitation to the study but also a hint for further research. I recommend an in-depth study specifically focusing on studying Islamic leadership behaviors of leaders in terms of their theocentric leadership narratives that emphasize theocentric worldview.

1. Personalized leadership

Padela's analysis of hadith revealed that Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized "everyone had a contextual leadership role, and that leadership was personalized based on a person's social, political, and economic standing" (2015, p. 66). The two classified properties under this theme were defining leadership roles and role modeling. As the three female leaders narrated their leadership experiences and perspectives, they described themselves to be visionary leaders who emphasize on an efficient output. They also stressed that they viewed leadership as a

responsibility. Despite practicing collaboration most of the time, A'isha, Deena, and Sara also delegated tasks depending upon the ability of the followers. Padela (2015) described the leadership roles to be personal as well as official leadership relying on the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His analysis was broad concerning defining leadership roles and concluded that leadership is contextualized based on the ability of a person's social, political and economic standing. Further, Padela discussed that Muhammad's (PBUH) leadership prevailed in both personal and professional settings quoting relevant hadith (see Padela, 2015). In on one of the hadith Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

All of you are shepherds and are responsible for your flock. The ruler is a shepherd to his subjects, the man is a shepherd of his family, and the woman is a shepherd in respect to her husband's house and children. All of you are shepherd and are responsible for your flock." (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 283)

My cross-case analysis extends Padela's analysis with some more properties that resulted from my case studies' data. I categorize these as the sub-themes that emerged from my cross-case analysis as shown in table 4. I will discuss each of these themes with relevant Islamic leadership literature in detail below.

Visionary. One of the most important leadership characteristic is to have a clear vision for any of the tasks they carry out and also set a direction in leading an organization (Altalib, 1991; Jabnoun, 1994). A'isha, having been in the leadership position more than five years clearly stated that a leader needs to have a clear vision. While she was defining leadership, she said: "leadership is leading a team, setting a direction, having a vision, and providing resources." She also extended her thoughts saying that leadership is actually the "vehicle" that helps a leader to implement the vision in collaboration with the team. A'isha went on to say that all the other leadership characteristics such as empowering her team, supporting them, working with them in a collaborative way, is a derivative of her overall leadership vision.

Sara, on the other hand was unwavering in her thoughts while defining leadership from her perspective. She argued that a person may have the right skills and experience, however, without a clear vision, the skills and experience are of no use. In her own words: "some people have both of them [skills and experience], but they do not know what they really want." Sara

also shared one of her personal practices that explains her style of setting up clear goals on a yearly basis that exhibited her visionary leader approach. She stated,

Each year on 31st December, I meet with my friends and set the objectives for next year. At that time, we also open up the envelopes of our previous years objectives and evaluate what and how we achieved. It may be only half of it I achieved, but still it is a success for me and I carry forward my remaining goals to the next year. (Sara, Interview, 2)

Ahmad and Fontaine (2011) stress that Islam emphasizes a leader to be visionary in order to efficiently lead an organization. Beekun and Badawi (1999) extend this by saying that a leader has the ability to see beyond assumed boundaries and come up with solutions. However, the core tenet in Islamic leadership is to follow the teachings of Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Summarizing a verse from the Holy Qur'an, Ahmad and Fontaine, stress that in Islam, "a leader is not free to act as he or she chooses, nor must he submit to the wishes of any group, he or she must act only to implement God's commands on earth" (2011, p. 125).

Delegation. A'isha, Deena, and Sara practiced delegation in their leadership role depending upon the task, the ability of a person, and the situation itself. Aabed (2006) emphasized that Islamic leadership does not motivate "centralization of authority and power in a charismatic personality of a leader, but it encourages sharing power through delegation of responsibilities" (p. 60). A'isha while narrating one of her successful leadership stories by organizing a big event, she stated that she prefers to give choices to her team, however, she confirmed "I delegate staff with the right task at the right time." Moreover, A'isha creates a situation where her team members are forced into decision making, hence exhibiting hidden delegation properties that also could be analyzed as an empowerment strategy. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) refrained people from taking leadership positions evaluating their competence to take up a leadership responsibility. The hadith below approves the ability of the leader to assign a task depending upon an individual's capacity.

Abu Dharr said, "I said, Messenger of God, why do you not appoint me?" He clapped me on the shoulder with his hand and then said, "Abu Dharr, you are weak. It is a trust, and on the day of rising it will be disgrace and regret except for the man who takes it as it

should be taken and fulfils what is demanded of him in respect of it” (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 676)

Deena expressed her nature of delegating tasks as she was narrating the execution of her department’s various committees. She stated,

Delegation helps a lot especially when I have such a huge department. I delegate a task to the committee. The chair then assigns it to its team members. Finally, we have a team working together in this manner. (Deena, Interview 2)

Contrary, Sara’s leadership experiences did not reflect delegation as one of her normal leadership practices. It was at one instance she explained using delegation. As she was explaining a professional meeting scenario, Sara stated that,

If any of my team members need to have a decision on some subject, I will invite the other members, but the main person leads the meeting and has to present a clear picture of what their struggle is, and what are the obstacles they are facing. (Sara, Interview 2)

Hence, Sara, Deena, and A’isha utilized their leadership opportunity to delegate tasks to their team members, however, considering the ability of the team member was a high priority as described in the Islamic leadership literature.

Emphasis on task accomplishment. Aabed (2006) laid out nine components while analyzing both Western and Islamic leadership literature on servant leadership (see Aabed, 2006, p. 69, 70). One of the nine components highlighted the importance of having a vision and being dedicated to accomplishing a task as a leader. He pointed, “Leaders should communicate their vision to others in ways designed to generate strong commitment needed to serve as a support to achieve the desired goals” (Aabed, 2006, p. 70). A’isha and Sara repeatedly stressed on this idea. They both argued at several instances, that as leaders, they aim for an efficient output all the time. A’isha seemed to be wise and she reiterated that depending upon the diversity of the team and their capabilities, she assigns tasks and follows up to achieve them. Moreover, A’isha’s perspective of leadership as a social activity explained that her relationship between herself and her subordinates was more about accomplishing the tasks and empowerment, whereas with her senior management team it was more of a support system for her.

Sara equated leadership to achievement while stating many of her leadership experiences. Deena also quoted at one instance that she is flexible in her leadership style irrespective of whether they meet as a committee face to face or virtually, accomplishing the task to the greatest efficiency was a priority for her. The quotes below illustrate these leaders' inclination to accomplishment of tasks.

My leadership has not changed. It is more about how I help the team to achieve their daily tasks. (A'isha, Interview 3)

If we think about the relationship on both sides in this social process, here [subordinates] it is about commitment to a task and accomplishing the tasks, but there [senior management] it is more about support. (A'isha, Interview 3)

I do care about the output. Now, how you [faculty] do it, it is up to you. You work early morning or late night or you work from home when you do not have classes. That is not my concern. But I want an efficient output. (Deena, Interview 2)

I can lead with one leadership style. I can communicate well with you. But what is more important for me is to achieve... it is not just the person's ability and the situation that I adapt to, for me, leadership is to achieve. (Sara, Interview 2)

Therefore, it is evident that all the three female leaders placed a higher priority to accomplish the tasks as one of their leadership roles. However, it might also be perceived as an accountability factor that these leaders are dedicated to accomplishing the tasks to perform their leadership responsibilities in a work atmosphere keeping in mind this accountability era.

Responsibility. Padela (2015) quotes a hadith from *Riyad al-salihin* affirming the significance of leadership as a responsibility; leadership is a trust and is accountable for every action. "You will covet leadership, but it will be a source of regret on the day of rising." (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 677). Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Do not ask for leadership. If you are given it without asking for it, you will be helped in it. If you are given it through asking for it, it will be up to you" (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 674), hence advising people not to desperately ask for leadership roles. A'isha, Sara, and Deena acknowledged their leadership role as a responsibility from a variety of perspectives while narrating their leadership

stories. A'isha while juggling her thoughts on identifying the source of her leadership; whether it is from Western leadership literature or Islamic leadership literature narrated an example of dealing fairly with budget in her position. She further said that, "It is not only about the budget or money. It is also a Zimmah [responsibility]. What I provide for my team members should be fair. It should be an opportunity for their growth as well." Contrary, Sara and Deena presented a different perspective when talking about leadership as a responsibility. Deena called for shared responsibility advocating for teamwork and stated, "I don't like to use *I*, instead I always communicate the tasks by using *we*, for instance, I say: We need to do this task, what is your plan to carry this out?" Sara on the other hand connected responsibility with the ability to make own decisions instead of relying on some authoritative personality always. Sara as a community leader explained the strategies she employs to motivate teens to make their own decisions. For instance, some of the parents had behavioral issues with their children and ask Sara to guide them. Sara, who believes in communicating with their minds, talks to them, motivates them to develop some action steps that will be crafted by them as well as followed by them. Sara takes this as her responsibility since she has an ability to communicate with the minds of even the younger generations and create an impact.

Role Modeling. A'isha being a reflexive person advocated that she indirectly sets herself as "leading by example." She explained:

I have a committed team and I tried to build that trust system which supports each other. It is not that I am the boss and you have to do the work. I also do the work and this is what I am. I know of other directors who have people work for them. I work with my team and I have learned this skill from my boss.

Here, A'isha was expressing her thoughts on two main ideas: team work and leading by example unlike other leaders. Similarly, Deena also reflected about her nature of leading by collaboration as one of her strategies to lead by example. She collaborates with her team and role models herself on variety of tasks to be carried out effectively.

Along the same lines, Sara expressed her opinion of learning from her ancestors. Sara was confident in her speech and argued that despite many of her ancestors did not know to read

and write, they were true leaders and today's generation need to learn from their best practices. She stated,

We really need to learn from them, you know. Remember the old people, they have their own successful stories. We need to listen to them and spread their stories. They are really a role model to us. (Sara, Interview 2)

Padela quoted many relevant hadith from the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlighting the character of Muhammad (PBUH) and advocated that "a leader's character is an important aspect of the leadership paradigm" (2015, p. 68). He quoted a hadith, "those I love most and those sitting nearest to me on the day of rising will be those of you with the best character" (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 631). Thus, "good leaders should be teachers by example, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a good example" (Aabed, 2006, p. 74).

2. Treatment of people

Padela's (2015) analysis also shed light on Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) emphasis on leader-member interactions and profuse concern for humanity. Padela (2015) argued that this behavior was evident in his treatment towards people. Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) was an icon for *promoting gentleness, justice, and welfare of the weak*. Padela (2015) shared several Hadith that portrayed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) nature of *promoting gentleness*. He elaborated based on a Hadith that "God is kind and loves kindness" (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 634 as cited in Padela, 2015). Further, Padela (2015) summarized that his analysis found Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be "patient, merciful, compassionate, and gentle" (p. 71).

Justice is divided into two types. One is divine justice that is consigned to God and is seen on the day of rising and the other is the human justice that is relevant especially to leaders in their roles with regards to dealing with humans (Padela, 2015). Injustice towards a fellow human being will end up becoming a trial on the day of judgement. "Beware of injustice. Injustice will be darkness on the day of rising" (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 563).

Abu Hurairah reported, the Prophet of Allah (pbuh) said, "A commander of the Muslims is a shield for them. They fight behind him, and he protects them from aggressors. If he enjoins fear of Allah, the exalted and glorious, and dispenses justice, there will be a great reward for him; and if he enjoins otherwise, it redounds on him. (Sahih Muslim, No. 851) Hence, "leaders

were cautioned to fulfill their responsibility towards followers and to give people their due rights” (Padela, 2015, p. 72). Another hadith encouraged humanity to stand up against injustice even in the event of danger, “the best jihad is a just word in the presence of a tyrannical ruler” (Padela, 2015; Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 194). Hence, one of the important aspects of Islamic leadership is to *promote justice* in their leadership roles.

Finally, for *promoting welfare of the weak*, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) helped the needy people who faced socio-economic as well as political issues to fight for their rights. Padela (2015) summarized Hadith 265 by stating, “as a leader he [Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)] encouraged to look after those in need, equating it to engaging in battle for the sake of God” (p. 73). Further, it was essential for a leader not to associate any stigma to the weak, for instance, people of low socio-economic status, orphans, or a widow. Rather, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) treated them in an equal manner.

During my cross-case analysis of female leaders’ narratives, I did not find exact same themes like promoting gentleness, justice, and welfare of the weak. Whereas, themes such as empowerment and emphasis on relationship based on trust and respect generally aligned with the overarching theme of treatment of people.

Empowerment. As evident in previous themes, collaboration and consultation, all three leaders practiced and believed in empowering their team members. A’isha, in most of her conversations uttered that her vision as a leader is to work as a team and empower her team members. She said, “Providing them [team members] the opportunity, I empower them in their positions, and their success is my success” (Interview 3). She also believes in selecting the right people to be in her team is crucial for her to be a successful leader. She argues that team members need to be proactive and willing to learn, therefore as a leader she will be able to guide them. For instance, A’isha explained that she empowers her team members to actively be a part of the decision-making process too. She elaborated,

It is a very important part of my job to help my team to make decisions. We make decisions together; sometimes, I purposely put them in a position that they have to make decisions on certain matters. This is really important for their own growth and development. (A’isha, Interview 1)

Deena's style of empowering leaders was more leaning towards accountability aspect. She explained that as a leader she is willing to facilitate and guide them through the tasks, however it is their responsibility to carry out the tasks efficiently. She clarified, "it is their work and I am willing to help them" (Deena, Interview 2). On the other hand, Deena narrated an incident where she empowers her faculty to directly communicate with the Dean of College for appropriate tasks without waiting to move through proper channels. She believes that empowering them does not mean that she is moving away from her role as a leader. Deena narrated:

I believe, if we need to get work done at a quick pace, you need to give some freedom. These faculties are not only as faculty, but they are coordinators as well and they do administrative tasks too. So, if I give them the right to directly communicate to senior management, it simplifies tasks. Moreover, the tasks are done with greater efficiency, I must say! But, I always tell them to keep me in the loop, so it is empowering them as well as I am informed of the tasks as a leader. (Deena, Interview 3)

Sara, reflected her way of empowering her team members by connecting with minds of people. She reiterated her leadership vision throughout her conversations. Sara explained that in work atmosphere, she needs to know the mind of the person that will help her know the skills of an individual. She went on to say that, "in order to empower my team members, my focus is to hone their skills at work." Since, Sara believes in communicating with minds of people, she explains that, she does not want to know personal lives of her team members, however that does not mean that she is unfriendly, but she maintains a distance and keeps the personal and professional separate. Hence, all three leaders had their own way of empowering their team members. In their narration, they reiterated the importance of empowerment and ways it helps achieve the end goal efficiently.

Emphasis on relationship based on trust and respect. A'isha and Deena emphasized that as leaders they put a great emphasis on building relations with their team members mostly on trust and create a culture of respect. A'isha believes that her success lies in the team's success and she boasts:

This is not a theory, I see it every day because we are a small team with different abilities, different expectations, and different backgrounds. The job is not easy especially when you are managing people and managing their expectation, but I always share with them, do not disappoint me. Building that relationship of trust and believing in them is important for me. (A'isha, Interview 2)

A'isha also went on to say that she believes it is crucial to know and understand each members' personal situations as a leader. Moreover, considering emergencies and priorities are important to balance work and family, she added. A'isha also clarified that her emphasis on building relationship goes back to her foundational months of building a team. She reiterated that during her initial weeks in her leadership position, A'isha tends to understand each team member on a personal level to build that relationship of trust. She emphasized that this relationship building strategy has helped her in personal life too.

Deena on the other hand reinforced teamwork and relationship building through informal socialization out of university settings. Each semester as a department head, she hosts family get-to-gathers so that they can get to know each other at a personal level and for socialization. She also believes that such informal gatherings are also a mechanism to reduce stress and worry that comes along with work atmosphere. Sara, on the other hand did not explain much about importance of relation building on trust and respect, rather she reiterated her style of communicating with minds of people and empowering them to achieve set goals.

3. Adaptive leadership

According to Padela (2015), the themes under first conceptual category: modeling and directing behaviors can be categorized into two categories based on leadership theories. For Padela, there are many different ways of categorizing leadership theories, one of which is leader-centered/follower-centered model. Hence, as per this dichotomy, my cross-case analysis unveiled the first three themes: a. personalized leadership, relationship with God and humanity, and treatment of people as leader-centered theory model where the leader is the focus. This cross-case analysis analyzed female leadership stories in light of the leadership style expounded by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and “delved into how his internal beliefs manifested in his interactions with people” (Padela, 2015, p. 74) further revealing new themes that align with the

leadership style of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The final theme under this category called adaptive leadership leans more towards follower-centered leadership model. Here, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exhibits ways he used to adapt his leadership based on the potential of the followers.

Follower capacity. Padela (2015) emphasized that there were diverse people during the reign of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and “each individual had their temperament” (Watt, 1961; as cited in Padela, 2015, p. 74). During the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) it was evident in his practices that he paid huge attention to followers’ capacity and made decisions accordingly. As Padela narrates, many hadith illustrated that:

He encouraged people in leadership roles to consider their followers’ capacity. He demonstrated this behavior by shortening his prayer so as not to cause duress to a crying baby’s mother (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 231). Then coupled it by informing people who led prayer to keep it short. “When any of you lead other people in prayer, you should make it short, for among you are there are weak, sick and old people. When you pray by yourself, you can make it as long as you wish” (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 228). (Padela, 2015, p. 75)

The above quote sums it up all, as to how important it was to consider followers’ capacity for a leader to effectively practice leadership. A’isha, Deena, and Sara, all three female leaders exhibited their concern for followers and adjusted their leadership depending upon their abilities and capacity to work. For instance, A’isha explained that in her team, each member has different abilities and skills. So, as a leader she keeps this in mind while delegating tasks. She elaborated that, for example,

One member has difficulty in communicating his/her ideas to the point in large meetings. Therefore, I make it a point, that he hones these skills in our small group meetings. Another member is great in communication. Hence, he/she takes lead in meetings with international clients too. (A’isha, Interview 2)

She also added that another group member is not outspoken, but A’isha makes sure to identify his/her other strengths and employs it to the best for her team to be successful. Deena executes her leadership in a similar fashion. Leading a large department in a University, she clarified that

depending upon the task and the ability of the individual she makes committees and teams accordingly to accomplish various tasks. For instance, Deena narrated an instance where she was invited to participate in a conference meeting to present a paper. After the initial meeting she realized that this conference is more appropriate for another faculty whose expertise clearly matches this conference theme, hence, she nominated that faculty to take over that conference. Likewise, Sara displayed her leadership adapting to followers' capacity in a few instances. She exhibited more empowerment and transformational skills rather than adapting herself to her team members' skills. For example, she narrated an instance where she explained that everybody can perform well and argued that more than the ability of a person it is the perspective of individual that enables a person to either succeed or lose in a particular task.

Hence, all the above themes reflect these three Qatari females' leadership behaviors as examined under Padela's (2015) Islamic leadership framework for the conceptual category of modeling and directing behaviors. All three leaders exhibited several leadership behaviors that aligned with that of Islamic leadership framework that Padela had developed, such as being visionary, role modeling, devotion to God and humanity, concern for followers and so forth. Either research participants narrated these behaviors, or they exhibited that in their professional meetings. The next category deals with implementing Islamic educational leadership model derived from the leadership behaviors of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as found in first conceptual category.

From my analysis, I noticed that only A'isha's leadership practices reflected Islamic education leadership principles that aligned with theocentric worldview as explained by Padela (2015). Sara and Deena referred to Islam and God few times while sharing their leadership experiences. However, this is not to conclude that one leader is religious than the other. This may also mean that one person chose to share more than the other did. Consequently, I present the last three themes in a different manner. The themes are developed individually referring to the literature followed by a summary discussion of how the Islamic educational leadership model/ theocentric worldview was evident in these three female leaders' experiences.

4. Relationship with God and humanity

Mir (2010) explained humanity to be dual obligations in nature. One is to oblige to God and the other is to their fellow human beings. Padela (2015) presents this argument from a leadership perspective arguing that leaders ought to be committed to God as well as their fellow beings. The two themes Padela (2015) identified were: Devotion to God and concern to followers.

Devotion to God. As mentioned previously, my interviews did not directly question these leaders on their Islamic leadership practices, rather the purpose of my study was to listen to their leadership experiences and later analyze it from Islamic leadership literature stance; all the three female leaders did not directly express their devotion to God. However, their religious utterances in between their narration to thank Allah for their leadership position and success stories reflected their devotion to God. On the other hand, these utterances might also be considered as a habitual practice that happens by default without any prior thinking or reflection involved. Therefore, to justify one's devotion to God, I believe there should be survey instruments specifically designed for that purpose. Interviews with open-ended questions and shadowing will also be appropriate to study this property of leadership, thus calling for further research in this area.

Concern for followers. Padela (2015) concluded that Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) leadership focus was to help people become closer to God. To achieve this goal, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized that Islam is not strict and "advised moderation in all aspects of life" (Padela, 2015, p. 65). He further elaborated that even in the amount of worship an individual must be engaged in, Padela cites Hadith 142 from *Riyad al-salihin* "You must only do what you are able . . . God does not grow weary of rewarding you as you will grow weary." Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) always demonstrated his concern for followers and reflected it in his acts of service such as monetary charity, communicating with followers and consulting for decision making, and collaborating with his followers for effective outcomes (Ahmad & Fontaine, 2011; Al Sehri et al., 2014). A'isha, Deena, and Sara, all three leaders exhibited heightened concern for collaborative leadership through placing emphasis on communication and consultation with their team members.

Cross-case analysis summary on relationship with God and humanity

My cross-case analysis revealed three sub-themes: Collaboration, communication, and consultation. Each of these sub-themes is elaborated below.

Collaboration. A'isha, Deena, and Sara throughout their conversations clearly reflected the need for collaboration in their leadership roles. My preliminary analysis resulted in several sub-themes such as teamwork, support, and human relationships that were merged under a big theme of collaboration during secondary analysis.

A'isha explained that it is more about “human relationships and how we support each other” (A'isha, Interview 2). She reiterated that her collaborative leadership style is a sort of “magic” that builds strong team ethics and helps her small team achieve high expectations, especially during tough deadlines. While emphasizing her collaborative leadership style, A'isha brought to light one of the challenges to working with diverse team members. She narrated that most team members used to capture her leadership style of collaboration and leading by example, but there were some members that used to suspect her to be “bossy.” A'isha's delegation of tasks for a collaborative output is mistaken to be commanding. However, A'isha remarked that “when they see me working hard and I am supporting them, Alhamdulillah [All praise to Allah] we build that team relationship for sure” (A'isha, Interview 3).

Deena echoed similar collaborative leadership style where she explains that teamwork automatically comes into play especially when nearing deadlines and during peak work demand. For instance, in the context of higher education, Deena explained that during add/drop course period there is a high flow of work and all faculty are dedicated towards meeting the assigned goals. Furthermore, Deena emphasized that she does not practice individualism and remarked “I always use ‘we’ and I don't like to use ‘I’ even when I need to communicate certain tasks via email, I say ‘we need to do this task, what are your suggestions and how can we achieve this?’”

Sara, holistically presented her leadership role in Al Zaki research organization. She explained that although she leads a small team of 4 members, the organization itself is large with about 60 members and they collaborate between other departments frequently for various tasks. Sara reflected back on the beginning years of her leadership role as the head of research department and explained that prior to her there was not much of teamwork execution displayed

in her department. Her initial years in that position required her to work hard on building a team spirit between employees and be productive in their tasks.

Communication. As all three leaders advocated collaborative leadership style, they advocated for communication as a key to achieving it. A'isha expressed that her focus is always to develop her team members. In this way she reflected her concern for followers. She explained that during large meetings in Al Danish Institute, she nominates her team members to disseminate their research ideas to all members of the institute hence empowering them in their roles. This required A'isha to communicate her ideas to her team members and listen to their ideas. On the other hand, A'isha reflected on her positionality as a director of research, a mother, a woman, a daughter and so on. She explained, as a full time working mother of five children, it is challenging to be at par with their school work. Therefore, she communicates with her children's teachers and builds a relationship of trust that helps keep herself updated about her kids' progress even at odd times. A'isha uttered, "Communication is a key for me! Communicate with me and I will communicate with you. That's one of my foundational priorities" (A'isha, Interview 3).

Along the same lines, Deena echoed, "communication is number one for me, in my leadership role. I follow an 'open-door policy' and I welcome not only coordinators, faculties, but also students to come and share their thoughts and concerns" (Deena, Interview 2). She further elaborated that this one-on-one communication helps her accomplish goals by empowering them and creating an accountability pattern to meet the deadlines.

Sara critically reflected as a leader "communicating with minds of people" (Sara, Interview 2). She always believes that leadership in itself is a skill of communicating with minds. She not only works as head of research in Al Zaki, but also is an active community member. Hence, she shared several stories where communication becomes her "magical weapon" of empowerment. For instance, she explained that she has counselled troubled teenagers by empowering them to reflect and also make them accountable for their actions. She explained:

I know I can communicate with the mind. I can make the person fight for their decision by themselves. Once I talk with teenagers, all I do is just listen so they can reflect on their actions and decide what works best for them. (Sara, Interview 3)

Sara also elaborated that communication helps bridge the gap between people, knowledge, and even communities. She explained that Qatar is a small country and there needs to be communication between organizations for better achievement in all spheres. She argued that there is a lack of communication between departments in one organization itself and that creates obstacles to succeed. She reiterated “if there is no communication, you will not get anything. There will not be any development” (Sara, Interview 2). She advocated that if there is good communication between people, especially with the minds of people, it can bridge knowledge gaps and help build a strong nation on the whole.

Consultation. The Arabic term for consultation is “Shura” (Padela, 2015). Literature on Islamic leadership has affirmed the use of Shura as one of the leadership principles. Furthermore, this style; leadership by consultation was evident in pre-Islamic Arabia and is also confirmed in the Quran (AlSehri et. al., 2014). Padela (2015) argues that although this leadership style has been practiced in the past and it has also been reaffirmed in the Quran and the Sunnah, “shura is not a source of information that can be utilized to derive a leadership theory” (p. 34). Hence, for Padela, shura was a leadership behavior more than a source that will help construct a leadership theory.

The above two themes; collaboration and consultation, worked in par with consultation as these leaders narrated their leadership stories. A’isha explained, “As a leader, I have specific values, I have ideas of how we should work as a team that will help us accomplish a specific task” (A’isha, Interview 2). She added that she always consulted with her team members to seek their opinion in executing any task as a team to have their input. One of her meeting observations clearly validated A’isha’s consultative leadership style. A’isha was explaining a new task they had to accomplish as a team and sought input from her team members prior to sharing her own ideas. This reiterated the significance of consultation and collaboration in her leadership role. Deena on the other hand, leading a large team of faculties and administrative staff, reflected that consulting or “voting” as she explained was very much in practice in her leadership role. She explained that as a head of the department, she had full authority to exercise

decisions, however, during meetings she shares the task in-hand with all faculties to seek their opinion and then make the final decision. Aabed (2016) reaffirmed that if leadership is mainly authoritative in nature then it does not allow all members to participate in decision making. He explained that “the process of shura educates the leaders as well as the followers to develop their internal satisfaction while trying to reach the position nearest to the Quran and Sunnah” (p. 61, 62). Deena elaborated that she believes in seeking all members’ input and was interested in listening to people’s thought who have contrasting ideas and critically reflect as to why they chose that option. Finally, upon consultation Deena makes a decision. Furthermore, she explained that shura is not only practiced in her college but is widely practiced in her university. Similarly, Sara expressed her consultative leadership style as she was explaining one of her professional meetings. She explained that depending upon the number of members and the task, she proposes the team with multiple options and listens to their opinions in turn and finally makes a decision by voting.

5. Fidelity to God and His Prophet (PBUH)

Padela (2015) concluded in his analysis of a comprehensive Hadith text *Riyad-al-salihin*, the development of a theocentric worldview as one of the core conceptual category and fidelity to God and His prophet was one of the underlying themes uncovered during his coding process. He explained that Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) primary message was to reorient people to God and this “reorientation came as a result of (a) active reflection and focusing on the (b) precedence of the afterlife” (Padela, 2015, p. 77).

Awareness to active reflection. Active reflection as Padela (2015) posits explains that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrated that leaders must be directing followers in such a manner so that they “consider their intentions and align them to actions deemed pleasing to God” (Padela, 2015, p. 77). One of the Hadith emphasizes:

Actions go by their intentions. Everyone gets what they intend. Anyone, therefore, who emigrates to God and His messenger, his emigration is indeed to God and His messenger. But anyone who emigrates to gain something of this world or to marry a woman, his emigration is to that which he emigrated. (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 1)

Several hadith reinforce this idea of focusing on one's actions and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reminded his followers that God looks at intentions and hearts of human beings (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 7). In fact, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not encourage to actively reflect on actions that one may be currently performing, or expecting to perform in near future; but also, on certain deeds that one may plan but not be able to accomplish it. *Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 11 confirms this idea: "Whoever intends to do a good action and then does not do it, God, the blessed and exalted, will write a full good action for him" (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 11). Padela (2015) clarified that although the term intention is not always explicitly mentioned in the hadith, but the closest interpretation of Hadith reveals that focusing one's mind and its actions are indeed intentions of an individual. In addition to active reflection on one's intention, Padela (2015) also added that repentance to God is an essential characteristic for a leader to exercise. Therefore, any unintended actions can be repented for through active reflection. "God will turn towards anyone who turns in repentance" (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 17).

Hence, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) portrayed that leaders are to be mindful and emphasize their followers to actively reflect on their intentions and direct it towards God. Ultimately, Padela (2015) argues that Islamic educational leaders should encourage in their followers a "core value of loyalty to God" (p. 79) to instill in all their actions and intentions. Furthermore, Padela goes on to say that in educational leadership, the responsibility does not end with just the fellow team members or followers, but it also incorporates facilitating similar atmosphere for students. He argues, "A student's central identity revolves around their relationship with God, all other forms of identity are subservient to that core identity" (Padela, 2015, p. 79).

Belief in Akhirah (afterlife). Padela (2015) concludes that basing actions on intentions and loyalty to God and His Prophet is coupled with having faith in the life after death. One of the Hadith validates this by associating true intelligence to a person who thinks about long-term impact, meaning the hereafter. "The intelligent man is the one who subjugates himself and works for what will come after death. The stupid man is the one who follows his own whims" (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 66). Padela argues that from an educational leadership lens, this means to help followers/team members reflect on their actions in such a manner that they "consider the ultimate consequences of their actions, giving them a sense of moral purpose" (2015, p. 80).

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during his leadership preached and practiced the message of Quran and the Sunnah, where the world is a temporary space that humans will transient to reach their final destination after life. Hadith 574 from *Riyad al-salihin* confirms this: “Be in the world as if you were a stranger or a traveler on the road.” Padela (2015) clarifies that this does not mean that one should live a hopeless life, rather Sunnah validates that “the best of people is the one who lives a long life and whose actions are good” (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 108) further calling for humans to reflect on their actions and intentions.

Cross-case analysis summary on Fidelity to God and His prophet (PBUH)

My cross-case analysis did not reveal many instances where Sara and Deena exhibited theocentric worldview of active reflection or belief in afterlife. However, as mentioned earlier, as a researcher I am neither to evaluate their leadership skills nor to assess their faith-based practices. Therefore, in what follows, I share examples of A’isha’s leadership stories that she described in her narrative. Although A’isha explicitly did not exhibit her belief in afterlife or encouraging her team members to reflect on their actions and intentions, A’isha seemed to be thankful to Allah for the opportunities He has bestowed on her. She also seemed to critically reflect on her leadership actions and decisions in terms of what is permissible and prohibited in Islam. At one instance, as A’isha was narrating her leadership experience, she explained that leadership is challenging, as it is to lead a diverse team with diverse ideas, skills, and expectations. However, she was critical and explained:

I am not saying we live in an ideal world! But, I understand that we face problems, and we do have frustrating moments. However, I make sure as a team we work through it collaboratively. Alhamdulillah²⁰, I am so lucky to work in Al Danish. It has a family environment, and everyone understands each member. (A’isha, Interview 3)

At another instance, A’isha emphasized that my research has given her the opportunity to reflect on her leadership actions and that she can go back to religious literature and best leadership practices from Islam. She went on to say that:

²⁰ All praise is due to Allah

I think in my workplace and in my leadership style, I need to do two things as a leader. I need to reflect always as a Muslim. Islam does not mean just fasting, praying, wearing hijab but it is more about in-depth practices. Second, when I am stuck with anything, I know that there are beautiful stories in the Seerah²¹ that can remind me to navigate the processes easily. I think it is more important to reflect and connect to Allah. I am not saying that you will find an answer to all your problems, but you will be satisfied with what you do. (A'isha, Interview 3)

In sum, A'isha was critical of her leadership practices and acknowledged that it is essential for Muslims to intentionally reflect on their actions and intentions.

Contrary, A'isha was critical in her explanation that the personal values one hold reflects in their actions. She argued that irrespective of the religious background one has, it the values and a sense of responsibility a leader holds towards their staff makes their leadership successful. She was critical of her explanations solely being her own perspective and argued that maybe her team members perceive it from a different lens. She said,

I am a born Muslim, and you know sometimes by default you do things without reflecting on it. Sometimes, I do reflect thinking whether I am being fair with everyone and whether or not my actions are aligned with my values. However, mostly, I think my day-to-day actions are by *default*. It also ties back to my upbringing, in most sense. But, I do know that this is how I perceive myself. For instance, what I see as fair, maybe other people do not see it as fair. (A'isha, Interview 2)

Hence, these quotes illustrate that A'isha was a critical leader who engaged in active reflection although by “default” due to her values and upbringing. It was evident that A'isha was thankful to Allah for giving her a successful leadership position as well as acknowledged the fact that there is abundant Islamic leadership literature to learn from in our educational leadership roles.

Another theme that rose from A'isha's narratives was the concept of halal²² and haram²³ under the main theme of fidelity to God and His prophet (PBUH). A'isha argued that she views

²¹ The study of the life of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH)

²² Permissible

²³ Forbidden

her leadership actions based off what is right and wrong and what is fair and unfair, rather than trying to connect it to Western leadership theories or Islamic leadership theories. She stated:

Even non-Muslims practice leadership styles that overlap with Islamic leadership and vice-versa, but when it comes to things like halal and haram, I am very conscious about it. That is where I make decisions that this is what my religion is telling me and I think about what is permissible and forbidden in Islam. (A'isha, Interview 3)

A'isha further elaborated with a story that explained her way of negotiating through the concept of halal and haram in her leadership role. She views leadership as a Zimmah meaning responsibility. She explained that when she provides an opportunity for one of the team members she also makes sure to provide opportunities to other members as well. Moreover, she explained that if any of her team member has a bad remark and she needs to communicate it to her superiors, A'isha presents it with a good intention to improve the situation rather than perpetuating the negativity. This explains how A'isha integrated the concept of halal and haram in her leadership practices by being just and fair to everyone. Finally, A'isha said both Islamic and Western leadership advocates for being fair and just in actions as a leader. What makes Islamic leadership unique to her, she explains that somewhere within her, there is a natural instinct that constantly reminds her accountability to Allah for her actions in the afterlife.

6. Developing a faith-based identity

Padela (2015) argued that identity is a “complex psychological phenomena” and that Muslims especially in the Islamic educational settings in the United States struggled with negotiating their multiple identities. Hence, his analysis revealed faith-based identity as a prominent theme. Therefore, in Padela's Islamic educational leadership framework, importance of building: (a) ummah, (b) familial ties, (c) social responsibility, and (d) preventing harm were foundational characteristics for an Islamic educational leader to practice and engage in. Similar to previous theme's discussion on fidelity to God and His prophet (PBUH), I develop this theme according to the Islamic leadership literature followed by a summary explanation of how it was evident in my cross-case analysis.

Ummah. Ummah represents the religious bonding between Muslims. Padela emphasized, “fellow believers’ religious bond transcended all other relationship, and they were encouraged to love each other solely for God’s sake” (2015, p. 81). Furthermore, this religious bonding becomes an essential part of faith as noted in the following Hadith. “You will not enter the garden until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another” (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 378). Thus, Padela (2015) argues that “being a part of ummah necessitated a psychological shift in identity,” and governs a Muslim leader’s social, economic, and political interactions with fellow beings, hence placing emphasis on faith-based identity.

Familial bonds. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) during his leadership period placed a greater emphasis on ummah and maintaining ties with kin and society. Two notable hadith validated Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) emphasis on kinship. It states to be dutiful to parents and a special emphasis on being dutiful to mother is explained. (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 312). The other hadith elaborated this and when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked about the deeds that Allah loved the most, he responded, “prayer, in its time,” and “kindness to parents” (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 312). Padela’s (2015) analysis emphasized this idea of kinship as a component of Islamic leadership as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) “directed followers to give precedence to one’s family and kin (p. 82). Hence, keeping in mind the familial bonds as a part of our complex identities is crucial for leaders to navigate their leadership roles.

Social responsibility. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) placed great emphasis towards social responsibility as an ummah. Several hadith narrated how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) enjoined social bonds with neighbors. Padela (2015) summarized these as follows:

Believers were warned about mistreating their neighbors (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 305) and were directed to be the best neighbor they could be (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 304). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was constantly directing followers to be mindful of their neighbor’s needs, both physical and psychological. For example, the Prophet Muhammad advised followers to cook enough food so that it may be shared with neighbors (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 304), to give gifts to neighbors (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 310), and to not disregard their neighbor’s feelings (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 306). (p. 83)

Therefore, for Padela (2015), Islamic leadership entails a crucial element of social and civic responsibility that begins by developing a faith-based identity.

Preventing harm. Islam emphasizes that Muslims as an ummah have an obligation and a responsibility towards each other. Padela (2015) elaborates, “Muslims now had an obligation to not engage in actions that could inadvertently harm other people” (p. 84). For instance, one hadith explains that Prophet Muhammad forbade businesspersons to engage in actions that may have detrimental impact on community members (*Riyad al-salihin*, Hadith 1778). Hence, from a leadership lens, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrated that leaders are to be mindful about their actions and work towards the welfare of the society as a whole.

Cross-case analysis summary on developing a faith-based identity.

As Padela (2015) summarized in the above section the main characteristics for leaders as laid in the Sunnah to develop a faith-based identity is working towards the betterment of ummah, maintaining familial ties, performing their duties as a social responsibility, and finally cause no harm to fellow beings. Along these lines, my cross-case analysis revealed three themes: empowerment, social gatherings, and community leadership practiced by Qatari female leaders in their leadership roles.

Empowerment. Empowerment is a recurring theme that aligned with both conceptual categories. First, in modeling and directing behaviors, empowerment was a prominent theme that all three leaders exhibited in their leadership behaviors. Second, empowerment is also one of the characteristics that reflects a faith-based identity. Summing up ideas from my previous discussion on empowerment, A’isha’s leadership centered on empowering her team members, and she believed that their success is her success. She believed that providing right opportunities to right members is crucial to empower her team. For Deena, empowerment was possible only through creating accountability. Therefore, her responsibility as a leader was to create awareness of their own responsibilities, hence empower her faculty. Finally, Sara, a leader who communicated with minds of people, posited that identifying areas for her team members to hone their skills is empowerment in her perspective. Hence, these three female leaders reflected a passion towards empowering their team members; however, it is difficult to conclude whether

this is associated with their intention of developing a faith-based identity as laid by Padela (2015) or is it just by “default” as a leader.

Societal gatherings. This theme overlapped with the theme of maintaining familial ties as presented by Padela (2015). A’isha uttered at several instances that she encourages socialization out of professional work too as she believes in improving human relationships. She argues that the more they knew each other, the more productive the work is and she is able to understand her team members better. Deena emphasized building societal relationship is crucial for productive work in their work place. She believed that hosting get-to-gethers provides an opportunity for socialization as well as works a stress reducing mechanism from their busy lives. She said, “I bring them together to know each other more and to minimize worrying” (Deena, Interview 3). Sara on the other hand, believed in understanding her team better, however, she always maintained a distance and kept the private and the professional separate. She explained that people tend to misuse the friendliness of a leader; hence, her focus is to communicate with minds of people and empower them in their skills.

Community leadership. Of all the three leaders, only Sara, emphasized her role as a community leader. She explained that in addition to working as a research director she also leads community-based women’s social group that focuses solely on women’s issues and finds ways to solve them. She elaborated that this social group identifies the needs of women and organizes special events to address the issues by prominent guest speakers. She also shared a narrative of woman who suddenly was diagnosed with cancer and how Sara communicated and motivated her to overcome the challenge with courage. Sara recalled that she encouraged the woman to get into extensive treatment and that cancer is curable rather than being unhelpful and deteriorating her health more. Moreover, Sara believed that she had the skills to understand and empower people based on their needs. Hence, she argued that it is her responsibility to use her skills in the right direction and serve the community.

In summary, many of the themes that emerged from my cross-case analysis are also evident in the Islamic leadership literature in general. Mahazen et al’s (2015) research highlighted 25 themes resulting from their analysis of the Quran, the Hadith, and the contemporary Islamic leadership literature. Some of these themes align with the themes developed from my analysis. For instance, one of the themes of Mahazen et al. was

trustworthiness and integrity. This was also found in my data where the female leaders believed in creating a relationship based on trust with their followers. Similarly, some other themes such as empowerment, good in communication, role modeling, flexibility, and so forth prevailed in my data too.

Theme II- Supports and challenges female leaders face in Qatar

In addition to the Islamic leadership themes discussed above analyzed under the light Padela's (2015) framework, my analysis also revealed some themes that unveiled the support system and challenges they faced as female leaders in higher education in Qatar. My preliminary coding revealed recurring instances where A'isha, Deena, and Sara reflected on various support they received as they navigate their leadership roles and the challenges they face. Hence, my secondary coding categorized these themes under two main themes: Leadership support system and leadership challenges (Table 7.2). The support system these female leaders received further revealed sub-themes as internal support and external support.

Table 7.2

Supports and challenges female leaders face in Qatar

| Main themes | Sub-themes |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Support system | |
| Internal | |
| External | Family |
| | Supervisors |
| | Qatar as a country |
| 2. Challenges | Femaleness |
| | Workload |
| | Diversity |
| | Culture vs. Islam |
| | Lack of reflection on leadership source |

1. Leadership support system

Historically, women and leadership research has focused on unraveling the challenges female leaders face. These three Qatari female leaders were critical and acknowledged the support they receive as they navigate their leadership roles and also shed light on challenges they face.

Internal support

Family. A'isha, Deena, and Sara truly praised the support they receive from their families in terms of education they pursued as well as the leadership position they hold at several instances. They argued that traditionally, men were very protective about women and it was deemed inappropriate for women to work hand-in-hand with men culturally. However, as the country progressed towards gender equality, they witnessed transformation within the country on personal, cultural, and professional level. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that still there is more to accomplish for Qatar to practice gender equality in all spheres. A'isha recalled the immense support she received from her husband while pursuing her doctoral studies in the West. She uttered, "Alhamdulillah, I am thankful for the great support I get from my husband. Although, he is not around me always, his support helps me balance my work and family easily" (A'isha, Interview 2). A'isha also admires the motivation and support she receives from her mother. From one lens, she connects her success to the upbringing she received from her parents. She elaborated that her mother's advice on priorities towards family and ways to balance work and family is valuable for her. However, this perspective may also be argued that traditionally the family and nurturing element is always associated with women and this is in itself not helping gender equality. But, A'isha seemed to take up responsibilities willingly as Islam has associated women with managing family as their primary responsibility. She argued that Islam, however, did not deny women from working in professional spheres and narrated historical instances where women were leading business and seen in wars during the Prophetic time. Deena and Sara also resonated with these ideas and praised the support they receive from their families.

External support

Supervisor. While discussing leadership narratives that are complementary, A'isha, Deena, and Sara acknowledged the support, they get from their supervisors in their workplace.

For instance, A'isha explained that being in a leadership role is challenging for everyone irrespective of gender and Al Danish's management team makes an effort to support each other at all times. She said, "sometimes under great stress we make a point to support each other and we check on the progress they make. We have an emotional bonding to support each other. It is more like a family to me" (A'isha, Interview 2). Deena on the other hand recalled her initial days in leadership role. She explained how she received support from her previous head of department in navigating her leadership role and responsibilities. She reiterated that during her initial days at Doha University, there was a lot that had to be accomplished in the department and that her supervisor guided her through the process without any hesitation. Sara also recalled her initial days in this leadership role and thanked the guidance received from her supervisor. All three leaders reiterated that the leadership team in their workplaces shared some bonding to support each other and that helped them move forward with their tasks efficiently.

Qatar as a country. The most prominent theme in terms of the support female leaders received was the support from Qatar as a nation. A'isha as a critical reflexive leader, argued that Qatar provides equal opportunities for everyone and that the atmosphere in each workplace differs. She explained, "It is difficult to generalize. In my workplace, they do not segregate duties based on gender" (Interview 3). Furthermore, she thinks that Qatar creates more opportunities for women to join the workforce and it lies in their hands to excel in the tasks they do. For instance, A'isha shared her narrative of how Qatar funded her higher education in the West. She elaborated,

Qatar provided me an excellent scholarship for me to study abroad in terms of financial support. I was also one of the luckiest students to meet Her Highness, Sheikha Moza. She is a great role model and motivation for all women in Qatar. (A'isha, Interview 2)

Similarly, Deena also acknowledged Qatar's support for her higher education in the West. Further, she explained that culturally it was challenging for women to travel abroad and pursue higher studies, but her family always encouraged women to continue with their studies. She also added that her family did not come under the cultural impact and did not discriminate activities based on gender.

Sara gave a great deal of thought on Qatar's impact in her leadership success. In addition to praising the support she received for her higher education, she argued that the development of country itself has helped her accomplish her dreams. She explained that even before a decade or so, Qatar was not very progressing. There were many hurdles and Qatar as a country was exploring ways to overcome these challenges. She believes that once Qatar began to progress, the culture itself progresses and fights against traditional stereotypes against women. She argued that, "society is adamant to change and come out of cultural restrains. But when the country develops, they notice the change and are willing to accept change for good" (Sara, Interview 2). Contrary, she holds the citizens of Qatar accountable for underutilizing the support offered by Qatar. Being an ambitious leader, Sara emphasizes that the Qatar National Vision 2030 (see Chapter 2) is geared towards the betterment of the whole nation and believes that the support Qatar offers towards women empowerment feeds into achieving this overall transformation.

Ultimately, these three female leaders in Qatar identified familial support as a primary internal support that helps them balance work and family. Support from superiors and Qatar as a nation seemed to be the external support that helped female leaders succeed in their leadership roles.

2. Leadership challenges

Despite the immense support female leaders receive from Qatar as nation, from family, and work place, Qatari female leaders expressed some leadership challenges. Femaleness/gender inequity, workload and diversity at workplace, misconceptions of Islam, cultural obstacles, lack of clarity in work atmosphere, and lack of reflection on leadership source were main challenges that A'isha, Deena, and Sara faced as female leaders in higher education in Qatar. O'Sullivan in a study exploring Emirati women (women in UAE) navigating their career paths highlighted some leadership support themes such as family support, having critical education system, urge to overcome obstacles, and career as a fulfilling and satisfying feeling. On the other hand, the challenges that rose were Emirati culture and traditions, women as a barrier to women's career development. A recent study by American Association of University Women (AAUW), "Barriers and bias: The status of women in Leadership" examines female leadership challenges in the classroom, in the workplace, and in politics. It also argues that there is no "monolithic 'women's experience' of leadership" (p. ix) hence considering the intersectionality and

positionality of a leader defines their experiences. This study highlighted several barriers to women in leadership. It identified a persistent pipeline problem, sex discrimination, balancing work and family, lack of effective networks and mentors, and negative impact of stereotypes and bias was as a biggest barrier (2016). Therefore, the Qatari female challenges however are not unique to women in Qatar as witnessed in literature around issues of female leadership echoes similar concerns worldwide, since decades (AAUW, 2016).

Femaleness. Gender defined roles and stereotypes associated with women was one of the challenges for Qatari female leaders. A'isha explained that being a female leader is “tough” especially to balance work and family. She emphasized that women are associated caregiving component. Furthermore, in Qatar, it is a tradition for women to participate in social events periodically. This in turn creates a social pressure on working women. A'isha uttered, “trying to please everyone creates lots of pressure. Our community expects a lot from females” (Interview 3). Contrary, A'isha believes that at work place she does not face any discrimination. Instead, she argues that from her perspective she does not face any gender discrimination but may be in other places it exists. However, she elaborates that this discrimination cannot be associated only with gender issues; it may even have several other factors associated with it, for instance individual's capabilities. In sum, A'isha remarked, “the culture here, especially for females is not welcoming and you have to find the right channel and the right path” (Interview 2). This quote contradicts her other remarks and presents A'isha's hesitation, as she tries to be neutral in her words while juggling her thoughts on gender roles in Qatar.

Deena, highlighted the barrier of females vs. males as one of the challenge she faces in her workplace. She recalled that she is one of the youngest faculty member who was nominated to lead the department. Moreover, the faculty under whose supervision she had pursued her graduate studies were still working as professors with high experience in the department and that created prejudice towards me. She clarified that despite her efforts to improve their relationship; other women do not view it positively and always find faults with her.

Sara shed light on barriers such as travelling alone out of country for women as cultural restraints. She said, “I was initially not able to travel alone for business trips, but now things are changing. It is more of a cultural restraint, rather than Islamic. Islam actually supports me to do my best” (Sara, Interview 3). Sara also blamed the society for perpetuating gender-defined roles

for women right from childhood. She goes on to say that, boys and girls are raised in different ways and girls are expected to do more than boys right from young age.

Workload. Workload is another challenge that leaders identified as a barrier to their leadership. They argued that leadership is complex, and it involves more administrative responsibilities than needed. Furthermore, lack of clarity at workplace adds additional workload. A'isha further explained that stringent timelines are stressful; however, her problem-solving nature helps her succeed at tough times. She recalled her initial leadership days. She elaborated that Al Danish was hosting a research conference and it was just months away when she started her leadership role. For instance, she was hiring research editors and she knew that due to short timeframe she might not be able to find reputed researchers, so her approach was to hire free-lancers who will be willing to produce quality work in short period.

Likewise, Deena also shared her annoyance over the bureaucratic policies of adding extra workload to leaders. She argued,

There is a lot of unnecessary paperwork/emailing for faculty to do. There are of course ways to accomplish the same task in an easy way, but documenting and providing evidences is such a practice in academia, that refrains faculty from the main goal of educating students and conducting research. I believe community service is more important than paperwork (laughter). (Deena, Interview 2)

This quote does not only reflect Deena's struggle with her leadership in achieving the tasks, but also sheds light on bureaucratic practices that leaders face. Deena also expressed that sometimes the work pressure is a lot and she ends up emailing faculty even out of office hours, however, she is thankful that all faculty work as a team to overcome such work pressures.

Sara added another spin to workload. She explained that lack of clarity and communication at workplace creates work duplication. She echoed similar concerns as Deena and blamed the bureaucratic policies for complicating the tasks instead of making it simpler for employees. She elaborated that producing evidences and documentation of work is a practice that needs to be critically reflected on. Sara also shared her initial leadership days at Al Zaki research organization where things were unorganized, and she gradually built guidelines and procedures for employees. She added,

As a leader, I focus on effectiveness of task. So, it is my responsibility to have clear guidelines so that there is no work duplication and to make sure that we do not fall into the trap of unnecessary work. (Sara, Interview 1)

Ultimately, workload as highlighted by these three female leaders is as a barrier for leadership in general and not related specifically to female leadership.

Diversity. Leadership is about leading people of different experiences, different skill sets, and individuals carry a lot more diversity depending on their backgrounds. Although, A'isha embraces diversity, at some point it also is a challenge from her perspective. She explained,

When I delegate tasks to my team members, I assign tasks based on their experiences and skill set. But sometimes, if that person does not accept the task as an opportunity at work, then it becomes challenging. For instance, I have an employee who thinks that I am bossy. I do my best to guide through the process, yet, it is challenging until I get required outcomes.

A'isha further elaborated that she works hard to accomplish tasks and has her own target to complete tasks to high standards. However, she thinks that working with people who are on the same page is far easier than with people of different skill sets. She remarks, "For me, leadership is more about emotion, rather than just operation" (A'isha, Interview 3). In sum, A'isha explained that diversity plays a crucial role in determining her leadership experiences as it depends on several factors such as the nature of the task, skills and ability of a person, and timing of the task. Therefore, A'isha's core strategy to overcome this challenge rests in building the foundation on trust and care that bridges the gap between a leader and employees.

For Deena, diversity of people presented an opportunity to learn, however a little challenging to navigate. Deena explained that being a young leader amidst people of different nationalities and different levels of experiences is challenging. She elaborated that nationalities does not create a challenge, rather it brings different and unique experiences to her department. Nevertheless, the cultural restraint of looking down upon a young leader as compared to that of an experienced one was challenging. She elaborated that the qualifications and ranking of a faculty mattered a lot and that created a pressure on her as an Assistant professor in her initial leadership days yet, leading the department. Deena's strategy to overcome this hurdle was by

creating a culture of respect, maintaining good relations with all members, and consulting with people for decision-making. This is an example of Shuratic leadership or consultative leadership as evident in the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Sara reiterated that she communicates with diverse minds of people. Sara's conversations reflected the importance of diversity with a positive connotation. Furthermore, as a community leader, she elaborated that she also communicates with people of all ages, especially with youth, who are energetic and passionate. She believes that youth need right counselling at the right time and she believes she has to skill to communicate with them.

Culture vs. Islam. All three leaders raised concern with the misunderstanding of Islamic values and women's rights and responsibilities. They all argued that cultural customs and traditions overshadows Islam. As highly misinterpreted that Muslim women are oppressed in a patriarchal society; A'isha, Sara, and Deena argued that it is actually the cultural practice engrained in a society rather than Islam itself. A'isha explained that women are given a high status in Islam and recalled many Islamic women during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who were leaders in business, accompanied male counterparts in wars, and elaborated that Aisha, Prophet's wife (Allah is pleased with her) is the first female scholar in Islam. She argued that when Islam has given rights for women then it is cultural beliefs and misrepresentation of Islam that makes it seem oppressive in nature.

Deena reiterated similar thoughts and explained that she has had equal rights and opportunities similar to that of her brothers. She elaborated that it was not a challenge for her to travel abroad and study as she believed it was more of a cultural practice rather than Islamic. Sara's words summed up the ideas from Deena and A'isha. She said,

There is a lot of freedom for women in Islam, but it is not allowed in our culture/country and it usually presents the opposite of Islam. I am working under an Islamic emperor. As far as I follow, what is halal and haram in my leadership position, I need not think further. But, once the culture interacts with Islam, it becomes problematic. Islam supports me to do better in my role.

Hence, it is evident that these leaders were aware of the negative cultural representation of Islam and ways it influences their lives. Probably, this may be one of the reasons that all three leaders

were hesitant to respond to my interview question, how does the Islamic context of Qatar influence their decision-making and leadership style.

Lack of reflection on leadership source. The final theme that arose from my cross-case analysis is the lack of reflection on leadership source. A'isha as a critical reflexive leader argued, "we never make time to think and reflect on our actions." She went on to say that,

Our [Islamic] seerah²⁴ is full of leadership stories, but the missing part is that we do not reflect or that we do not relate back to our leaders. It is also because of the dominant Western leadership theories that are widely practiced in our daily leadership roles.
(A'isha, Interview 3)

She continued her conversation explaining that there are leaders around the world who are just, kind, collaborative, etc., and these skills overlap with Western leadership theories as well as Islamic leadership theories. So, "it is our mistake that we are not reflecting on the leadership source" (A'isha, Interview 3). She finally praised the efforts and significance of my research as a contribution to the Islamic community where an initiative is made towards incorporating Islamic leadership beliefs and practices.

Summary

The three leaders exhibited several Islamic leadership behaviors in their leadership practices as explained in the cross-case analysis and discussion above. The female leaders were visionary and believed in role modeling as their leadership responsibility for efficiency in work. Additionally, they practiced effective communication and collaboration as one of the crucial leadership strategies. They believed in empowerment, emphasized a culture of respect and trust, and were readily available for feedback. They also displayed adaptive leadership depending upon follower's capacity. Noteworthy is that, these Islamic leadership characteristics/qualities is emphasized by many scholars (see Aabed, 2014; Barrie, 1997; Safi, 1995; Altalib, 1991; Jabnoun, 1994). For instance, research on leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) portrayed 25 necessary characteristics of a leader analyzed from the Sunnah and the Qur'an (Barrie, 1997). Ability, bravery, calmness, dependability, exemplariness, fairness, genuineness, honesty, initiative, judgment, knowledge, liberalism, modesty, nobility, organization, personality, quality,

²⁴ Biography of a person; In this context it is Stories of Prophets

responsibility, sacrifice, teamwork, understanding, versatility, wisdom, youth, and zeal are the leadership characteristics most of which were seen in Padela's Islamic educational leadership framework. Furthermore, my cross-case analysis resulted in themes such as awareness to reflect and concept of halal and haram to exhibit fidelity to God and His prophet. These leaders also emphasized their role in empowerment of team members, societal gatherings, and community leadership that helps develop a faith-based identity according to Padela (2015).

Finally, in addition to these six main themes, my cross-case analysis also revealed some leadership support system such as from family and Qatar as a country. Also came to light were some leadership challenges that A'isha, Deena, and Sara faced as female leaders in higher education in Qatar. Some of the challenges such as gender discrimination/femaleness, balancing work and family, and diversity overlapped with the global challenged that female leaders face. Additionally, female leaders were critical about the misrepresentation of Islam under the guise of culture. A'isha also highlighted the drawbacks of lack of reflection on leadership source as a leader.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Implications

Women's participation in all economic spheres has been crucial globally and Qatar needs collaborative effort from all stakeholders from businesses, policy makers, academic institutions and the community itself to bridge the gender inequality gap (Willen et. al, 2016). The main concern is the role of women in leadership, and particularly in educational leadership. Therefore, this study examines the experiences of women in educational leadership in Qatar in the field of higher education. While there is a handful of research focused on Qatari leadership perspectives in K-12 education system (Al-Fadala, 2015; Romanowski et. al., 2013; Romanowski & Amatullah, 2014; Ellili-Cherif et.al, 2011; Romanowski, 2015), there is not any significant research done in the field of higher education. Hence, this research focused on the women's narratives about their leadership approaches concerning Islamic leadership theory and practices in higher education settings. The central question guiding this study "How do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education?" addresses four gaps in the literature. They are *leader* narratives on leadership, *female* leader narratives on leadership, female leader narratives in *higher education*, and female leaders *themselves* narrating about their experiences as a leader in *Qatari Islamic context* and the *educational reform*.

Moreover, these leadership narratives revealed ways female leaders navigate their leadership role in light of Islamic leadership theory and practice. Ultimately, analyzing these female leadership stories from extensive literature on both Western leadership theories and Islamic Leadership theory and practice, I believe that Islamic leadership theory offers great insight to the educational leadership in higher education as it has done in the K-12 education system (see Padela, 2015). Therefore, the all-encompassing nature of Islam in community life emphasizes that these leadership behaviors and practices are not restricted for Muslims alone to practice; rather all communities can embrace it.

Contribution of the Study

Although my findings reiterated those included in the literature around leader narratives, female leadership narratives, and amidst the educational reform and Islamic context of Qatar, I set out at the beginning of this study to fill a gap in the literature by exploring female leadership

stories specifically in the field of higher education due to the dearth of research in this educational setting. Based on my experience in Qatar in the field of higher education, I was drawn to explore higher education female leaders' experiences for a few reasons. First, there is abundant research in the field of K-12 educational settings especially focusing on the impact of the "Education for a New Era" reform, but higher education field was not studied much. Second, my definition of higher education was any educational institution outside of K-12 system and that opened up the doors for research organizations as well. This added more value to my data incorporating diverse Qatari female leadership perspectives.

Leaders are the anchors of any organization, studying their experiences added more to the pool of leadership literature in general. Specifically, the findings of this study shed light on female leadership in Qatar in higher education. Furthermore, as I analyzed their leadership stories with the help of Padela's (2015) Islamic educational leadership framework, it illuminated many leadership practices that were barely considered or thought of as female Muslim leaders. Padela (2015) developed this Islamic educational leadership framework and one of his recommendations was to implement this model to study Islamic leadership practices. I believe implementing this model in an Islamic context added more significance to my research as one of the leaders, A'isha remarked, "I never thought of my leadership practices specifically as to where my leadership comes from, from the West or Islam, and this research has helped me think about my intentions and actions as a Muslim." As much research with regards to Islamic leadership has been carried out in a multicultural context in the West in Islamic schools (Padela, 2015; Aabed, 2012; DeCuir, 2016; Timani, 2006; Fahmy, 2013), this research has triggered a conversation around Islamic leadership in an Islamic context itself. I hope and believe that the implications of this study are seriously considered and implemented for future action to practice Islamic leadership.

Despite that many themes were recurrent in Western leadership literature; the lack of reflection on leadership source, belief in aakhirah, and thinking about the halal and haram in their leadership roles was a key contribution of this study. Finally, this study shared some counter narratives that debunk the stereotypes associated to women and Islam in terms of oppression and freedom. Although, these leaders did not debate much on the gender aspect, they argued that Islam is misconceived with the cultural beliefs and it presents as a challenge to them as female leaders. This issue was addressed in detail in the cross-case analysis under Islam vs

culture section. All three leaders acknowledged that this research provided a platform for reflecting on their leadership practices thoughtfully. I hope leaders continue to reflect on their leadership roles and responsibilities and revive the Prophetic leadership practices continuing Islamic traditional practices. Furthermore, these leadership behaviors and traits are not accustomed just for Muslims, but the goal is to extend these practices to all members of the community.

Implications for Practice and Research

The aforementioned findings and contributions of this study have the potential to inform the work of leaders, for female Muslim leaders, professional development organizers, and for researchers. Leaders around the globe can learn from the leadership perspectives of female Muslim leaders in Qatar in the field of higher education. The necessity for Muslim leaders to self-reflect on their leadership practices is paramount from an Islamic perspective; hence, this research highlights its significance through its research findings. It would also be appropriate for professional development organizers to take heed of the understandings gleaned from these three leaders' perspectives so that in future they might consider incorporating Islamic leadership literature revitalizing the leadership practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is problematic that Islamic nations are not considering the best practices that are rooted in Islamic tradition. Although, thousands of years have passed after the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Michael Hart identified him as the top influential leader in his book *The 100: A Ranking Of the Most Influential Persons In History* (2000). I argue that this honor should be nurtured and embraced by the Muslim community to thoughtfully implement such leadership practices into their leadership roles. One of my recommendations of this study is that, in the development of leadership practices and principles, Muslims can look to their own world and not just borrow from the West. If leaders learn and practice more from Islamic lens, the literature and best practices from Islamic part of the world would contribute a great deal to the study of leadership worldwide. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of researching women leaders' narratives in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice demystifying the myths and stereotypes associated with Islam and women in the Middle East.

For leaders. These implications do not serve only female leaders but leaders irrespective of gender, worldwide. Leadership has been studied for decades and the literature around leadership is continually growing. Yet, researchers argue that some questions remain unanswered and that leadership is a complex phenomenon (Harshman & Harshman, 2008). Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) explain that historically research on leadership theory began in Europe and then spread to the United States, however, these models rarely consider the “cultural and religious heritage of other civilizations” (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Padela, 2015). This is also true in the field of educational leadership. Padela argues, “leadership models that are grounded in the Western intellectual tradition pose a problem for Muslim educational leaders trying to practice their faith” (2015, p. 87). Nasr (2002) raises an important argument that the Islamic intellectual tradition does not believe in secularism, hence Islamic leadership theory weaves Muslim’s religious beliefs in leadership roles. Padela (2015) developed the Islamic educational leadership framework by analyzing the Hadith from religious literature and concluded that “his words, actions, and way of thinking were all connected to a theocentric worldview” (p. 87). Noteworthy is that Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) leadership was guided by a “moral purpose” that is defined through the revelation of the Quran. Mattson (2008) confirmed this interaction with God through the archangel Gabriel in her study exploring the connection between the Prophet Muhammad’s sense of morality, pre-modern Arabian culture, and the morals dictated by God. Results from this study add to the existing leadership literature on spiritual leadership, ethical leadership, transformational and servant leadership emphasizing the significance of Islamic educational leadership. By implementing Padela’s Islamic educational leadership framework, this study provides insights on female leaders’ practices and thoughts to consider in a leadership role. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 share female leaders’ narratives on how consciously or unconsciously they engaged in Islamic leadership practices. The reason I say “consciously or unconsciously” is because my interview questions were not specifically asking them to talk about their Islamic leadership practices, rather, the interview questions were broad and open that asked them to share their perspectives of leadership in general and then analyze it from Padela’s educational leadership framework (See Appendix-A). This may also be seen as one of the limitations of study. However, the reasoning behind this approach was to honestly reduce the bias that may have been triggered by asking religion specific questions after my personal reflection on one of the leader’s resistance (Khadija) to my research relating to Islam as

discussed in chapter 4 where I discuss negotiating my positionality as a researcher. Ultimately, these leadership narratives and the cross-case analysis encourage leaders to engage in active reflection on their leadership practices. Furthermore, this study provides Muslim leaders with insight on how to rejuvenate the leadership practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

For professional development. Qatar especially hosts many leadership programs for school leaders as well as leaders in other spheres to enhance their leadership skills. The most prominent is the leadership training provided by Qatar leadership center, an initiative of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in collaboration with The Hague Institute for Global Justice. The vision of this training is to develop leadership and knowledge within the community and support the overall Qatar National Vision 2030 highlighting “the fact that Qatar cannot fully develop its economy and society without its capital and chief resource – its people” (Qatar Leadership Centre, 2018). The underlying issue is the lack of Islamic leadership research and dissemination of its findings. I believe if professional development organizers take heed to adapt and implement Islamic educational leadership framework into their designed curriculum, leaders would gain an overall understanding of leadership, moreover that which is contextual. Furthermore, these leaders offered great insights into their leadership practices that overlapped with Islamic leadership. Therefore, insights gleaned from these leadership narratives could serve as a starting point in designing professional development programs from an Islamic leadership lens.

For research. Based on my study’s findings, I suggest the following recommendations for future research. First, I recommend a holistic analysis of both Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), including all Hadith textbooks, in order to develop a comprehensive Islamic educational leadership framework. Additionally, studying Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) biographical literature will add further insight into his leadership practices that may help guide leaders in their leadership roles.

Second, extending this study in various geographical contexts will add diverse leadership insights based on the context leaders belong to. For instance, this study was carried out in an Islamic context, where Islam is the dominant religion. It will be interesting to explore, female leadership in a multicultural context where Islam is not a dominant religion, such as U. S., Canada, India, and other multicultural contexts. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of female

leadership narratives across the globe may shed light on diverse practices and explore the similarities and differences in leadership approaches and styles.

Third, based on the comprehensive Islamic educational leadership framework, I recommend developing professional development programs for school leaders and leaders in higher education. Many countries offer professional development training for teachers and leaders to enhance their roles, yet, most of the programs offered has its roots in Western literature and practices. I recommend that the invaluable treasure of leadership lessons from life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Quran be disseminated and practiced in leadership roles. Furthermore, a study after rendering such professional carried out comparing leadership practices pre and post this professional development program. I believe this may offer great insight into the impact of Islamic leadership practices.

Finally, the idea of empowerment was a recurrent theme for female leaders in Qatar. It will be interesting to inquire how these leaders' subordinates perceive their leader's empowerment strategies. Furthermore, the idea of betterment of Ummah through empowerment ties back to community leadership and Dewey's public good concepts. Exploring the intersection of Dewey's public good and Islamic leadership may be a groundbreaking leadership research.

Limitations

While this study offered valuable insights to the female leadership practices in Qatar in the field of higher education including its implications on Islamic educational leadership, there were certain limitations that should be noted. Padela's Islamic educational leadership framework was developed by analyzing only one source of Hadith textbook, Riyadh al-Salihin based on the ranking and authenticity of this book. However, it should be noted that there are other textbooks of hadith that would have been useful in enriching the Islamic educational leadership framework. Along the same lines, I believe carrying out an analysis of Hadith textbooks myself would have added another researcher's perspective to Padela's framework and elevated our understanding our Islamic educational leadership.

Another limitation of the study lies in the participant demographic and leadership background. Although, I defined higher education as any educational institution other than K-12 settings, I believe having more leaders exclusively from universities/colleges would have added more higher education perspectives, where leaders maneuver their leadership roles amidst teaching and leading. Two of my research participants; A'isha and Sara, led research

organizations where they did not interact with the students but just worked in teams with other employees to achieve their organizational goals. Whereas Deena, was from a university setting, hence her leadership directly correlated to the field the higher education as understood globally. Although, I intended to recruit more participants for my study, participant recruitment was one of the biggest challenges as explained in chapter 4. Hence, utilizing convenient sampling and snowball sampling technique, I interviewed leaders who were willing to contribute to my study after an intense research participant search.

Summary of the study

In many ways, my research findings overlapped with the literature that has examined female leadership in general and Islamic leadership specifically (See Padela, 2015). The two main overarching themes were: (1) Female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar, (2) Leadership support system and challenges. The first theme has six sub-themes: personalized leadership, treatment of people, adaptive leadership, relation with God and humanity, fidelity to God and His prophet, and developing a faith-based identity. The first- three sub-themes related more towards female leadership behaviors whereas the last three sub-themes aligned more towards reflecting a theocentric educational leadership. The additional themes formed second overarching theme: leadership support system and challenges. This theme had two sub-themes, support system and challenges respectively. Further, the support system was categorized as internal and external support system.

First, with regards to their leadership behaviors and style, all three leaders highlighted the significance of collaboration, consultation, empowerment, and relationship based on trust and respect. They reiterated the importance of consultation called as *shura* in Islamic literature and ways they practice it in their leadership roles. Empowerment of team members was a priority for all three leaders and they shared many stories that portrays their ways of empowering their team members as discussed in results and cross case analysis chapters. Additionally, all three leaders emphasized the significance of collaboration and working in teams for personal and professional growth. This also improved work atmosphere by creating shared responsibility and accountability on all members. Finally, all three leaders also lay emphasis on relationship with their team members and focused on building and enhancing relationships based on a culture of respect and trust. Islamic educational leadership pertaining to my leaders reiterated themes in Islamic literature such as being aware of reflection in their leadership roles and considering what

is halal and haram from an Islamic perspective. Leaders also shared their stories of community leadership and stressed the need for empowerment of team members from an Islamic perspective as they believed in Akhirah (hereafter) and held themselves accountable for their leadership actions.

Second, the leadership support system and challenges highlighted some recurring themes from leadership literature. They also acknowledged the familial support they receive along with the major contribution of Qatar towards their successful leadership stories. With regards to leadership challenges the overarching theme was the misconception of Islam with local cultural values and practices. One leader also acknowledged that the problem lay in their practices as they do not engage in reflecting on the leadership source as they perform their leadership duties.

Hence, the findings of this study shed light on a variety of female leadership perspectives that overlapped with Western leadership styles and Islamic leadership practices. The idea of empowerment of team members overlaps with that of Greenleaf's servant leadership style where a leader possesses characteristics such as willingness to act and pursue a vision in which all team members engage actively pursuing the dream. The leaders were empathetic, understood their team members and engaged in effective communication. Additionally, these female leadership practices of motivating their team members as discussed in the cross-case analysis and discussion chapter also correlated with the transformational leadership style where leaders focused on, "inspirational motivation" - motivating and empowering their teams to achieve high expectations; "idealized influence" - these leaders were admired, respected and trusted as role models; "intellectual stimulation" - where leaders were found encouraging their team to be creative and innovative challenging their inner beliefs and organizational thinking; finally "individualized consideration" - where leaders considered individual needs of each team member in order to empower them for their professional growth (Bass & Avolio, 1990). This was evident in all the three female leaders who contributed to my study. In addition to these overlapping characteristics with Western leadership theory, the unique finding from an Islamic leadership lens was that these leaders considered what is halal and haram in their leadership roles and believed in akhirah; and that they are accountable for their actions in the hereafter. These leaders consistently echoed empowering their team members as a priority and that in turn ties back to the betterment of ummah from an Islamic leadership lens. Ultimately, these unique leadership practices made their leadership style Islamic and theocentric. Another unique finding

outside of leadership literature was that all three leaders argued that there are many stereotypes associated with Islam and that those birth out of different cultures and not Islam. They expounded that Islam empowers women and what media seems to propagate are cultural biases and that has nothing to do with Islamic values.

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APPENDIX-A

Interview Protocol

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____ (pseudonym)

Interviewer: Tasneem Amatullah

Interviewee: _____ (pseudonym)

Position/Designation of interviewee: _____

Research Question:

How do female educational leaders in Qatar narrate their experiences of leadership in higher education?

Protocol:

Prior to starting the interview, discuss the following:

- Purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity of responses
- Option to withdraw at any time
- Permission to record

Potential Interview Questions

- How do you define leadership?
- Consider what it means to be a female leader, and describe your thoughts.
- What has being a leader looked like for you from the time you first started your job until now? How have your leadership practices changed over time?
- Do you think the Islamic context of Qatar influences your decision-making and leadership style? Can you give me an example?
- We spoke in the meeting about using these questions below in case you cannot observe actual meetings.
- Guide me through a typical meeting.
- Who is there?
- Who is leading the meeting?
- What is the structure of the meeting?
- Walk me through an experience where being a female leader was complementary.
- Walk me through an experience where being a female leader was challenging.
- Describe for me a memorable experience you had as a leader in your position. (This prompt was repeated to elicit further stories.)
- Finish this statement for me... being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is like...
- Additional questions based on previous interviews and observations. Is there anything you'd like to tell me that I forgot to ask?