A relational understanding of work-life balance of Muslim migrant women in the West: Future Research Agenda.

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A relational understanding of work-life balance of Muslim migrant women in the West: Challenges and opportunities.

Abstract

Increasing globalisation and work intensification has led to a blurring of roles and boundaries between work and family. Such influences are more pronounced in migrant workforces who often struggle to balance their work and life in a new national context. The problem of work life balance (WLB) is further compounded in the case of minority migrant groups such as Muslim women living and working in a Western context, as it is unclear how, in the face of discrimination, Islamophobia, family and other socio-cultural and religious pressures and the WLB issues of migrant Muslim women (MMW) are enacted. As most studies of WLB are at a singular level of analysis, this paper contributes to the WLB literature, through the lens of intersectionality, by providing a multi-level relational understanding of WLB issues of MMW working in a Western context. Future research and themes identified in this paper provides a multi-level and relational understanding of WLB of MMW and implications for managers tasked with managing WLB issues for Muslim migrant women in Western contexts are also discussed.

Introduction

This paper concerns work life balance of Muslim migrant women in the West. Engaging women, (including) Muslim migrant women in full employment in a nation's economic activity has been a widely shared concern (Henchke, 2006). Despite increased globalisation and higher incidence of migration from the East to the West, there are ongoing concerns in policy reports from the USA, UK, Europe and Australia that migrants, especially Muslim migrant women, have experienced difficulties in fully participating in the workforce, and as a consequence, it contributes to their sustained levels of unemployment (Aziz, 2012, 2014; Benton and Neilsen, 2013; Dyke and James, 2009; Ravve, 2009; Syed and Pio, 2010). From a cultural and sociological approach and in the context of this paper, the Western world is defined as including all cultures that are directly derived from and influenced by European cultures (see Toybee, 1969). Hence western Europe includes (e.g. France, Ireland, United Kingdom), central Europe

(e.g. Germany, Poland, Switzerland), northern Europe (e.g. Sweden, Denmark, Norway) and southern (or southwestern) Europe (e.g. Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Malta), in the Americas (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, Panamá, Colombia), South Africa and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). Together these countries constitute Western society. Despite a great deal of attention to work life balance issues in the West, there is still limited literature that deals with work life balance (WLB) issues of Muslim migrant women (MMW) in the West and its implications for gender equality issues in the workplace. A number of studies propose that employment issues and challenges faced by migrant women in the host labour market are more intricate than their male and female counterparts because of the weaving of gender with other forms of identity, such as ethnicity, religion and skill (e.g., Syed and Pio, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2009; Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006). Even though the concept of WLB has attracted extensive research in a local, industry and national settings, there is limited evidence of WLB issues in international human resource management literature (IHRM) focusing on migrants in general, and minority groupings of migrants operating in Western settings, in particular. In this regard, through our review of intersecting literatures on work-life balance and migrant women, we attempt to contribute to this special issue by filling a knowledge gap on WLB of Muslim migrant women. Through our review, we develop a multi-level relational understanding and propose future research implications on this socially relevant topic.

This paper contributes to the IHRM literature in the following ways: first, by developing a relational understanding of WLB issues of MMW, we address the Special Issue's last bullet point on investigating work-life balance issues and the tensions between East and West worldviews (Syed and Pio 2010). Second, by adopting a relational approach (Özbilgin 2006; Syed 2008a; Al Ariss and Syed 2011), which entails researchers to take into account the relation (hence the name relational) between various levels, micro-individual; meso-

organizational;, and macro-societal, in shaping our understanding of how MMW deal with the tensions of conflicting worldviews in relation to WLB (Al Ariss et al. 2014). The individual level comprises the subjective experience of the individuals such as the perceptions of MMW and the role of agency in accessing WLB. The organizational level questions the intermediary influence of the management of organizations, for example, the design and implementation of WLB and diversity policies and practices for MMW working in Western settings. Finally, the macro-contextual level refers to a country's institutional context with its cultural values, legislation, and politics of migration that frame WLB of MMW. Such a relational approach helps in offering a more granulated and contextual understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Our paper is organised as follows. First, we review and offer a brief critique the literature on important topic of WLB, identifying the limitations it has in the context of MMW. This allows or inhibits us to portray a balance for MMW in the two commonly understood domains of family and work. Second, we provide a review of the importance of MMW and the related work challenges and opportunities they face in a Western context. More specifically, we look, through the lens of intersectionality, at the issues of gender equality, values, family, religious and cultural pressures. Overall, based on our review and critique of the literature, we present a multi-level, relational understanding of WLB issues of MMW in Western work settings, thus showing the intersecting areas that mitigate at different intersectional points.

Understanding work-life balance of Muslim migrant women

We define Muslim migrant women (MMW) as women migrants of Muslim faith pursuing a career or profession in a Western host country. At the outset, it is worth mentioning that there is no singular "Muslim woman" concept that corresponds to the experiences and

grievances of the diversity of women who identify as Muslim (Harris 1990). We argue that Muslim women come from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, hold diverse political viewpoints, and adopt beliefs ranging from staunch secularism to religious orthodoxy. That said, when it comes to the diversity of Muslim women, the literature shows that they often face adverse experiences because they are falsely stereotyped as submissive, weak and oppressed (Aziz 2012). Muslim migrant women might face additional challenges owing to their strong patriarchal cultural, economic, familial and work-life balance pressures as well as due to ethnic discrimination at work in Western nations (Ali 2013; Akhtar 2014; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007; Kabir and Evans 2002; Northcote et al. 2006; Scott and Franzmann 2007).

With an increase in the blurring of boundaries between family- and work-life domains, the concept of providing WLB opportunities for employees has been regarded as a novel management approach for managing issues of work intensification and resolving work/family conflicts and this approach has gained significant legitimacy and momentum in the field of human resource management (HRM) (Guest, 2002; Beauregard and Henry 2009). Although there are numerous definitions of what we mean by the concept of WLB, we find Guest's (2002) definition of WLB inclusive. Guest defines WLB as the ability to allow "sufficient time to meet commitments at both work and home" (p.263). Even though there is a widespread acknowledgement that the concept of WLB is shaped by changes in a nation's social, economic and institutional environments, most conceptualisations of WLB have emerged as standardised approaches from Anglo-Saxon and developed nations in the West (Gregory and Milner 2009;; Tomlinson 2007). A major gap that has been identified in the literature on WLB requires focusing not just on the individual, but also at managerial and societal levels, to uncover WLB issues of the understudied groups, such as ethnic and religious minority workers in Western contexts (Casper et al. 2007; Eby et al. 2005; Fleetwood 2007 ; Kamenou 2008; Syed and Pio 2010). Others (Dyke and James 2009) describe the state of 'immigrant British South-Asian

Muslim women' (p.6) in the UK as one of 'triple' paralysis. This report found that the above group faces severe unemployment, despite nearly 57% of the surveyed women wanting to work. They were hindered less by religious and cultural influences and more by lack of what the above authors term as 'triple paralyses': arising out of lack of (1) skills and training, (2) support for fulfilling domestic and childcare responsibilities; and (3) tailored engagement in the wider labour market and society.

With an increasing diversity in family and work life roles, for example, presence of nuclear, joint- and blended-families, double-income couples, families with age-care responsibilities, solo parents and so on, there is a greater need to understand how these changes impact on employees' needs for WLB in general (see for e.g. Greenhaus et al. 2003), and for the purposes of this paper, from an IHRM context, for MMW working in the West, in particular. Further, as a result of increased workforce and educational participation by women generally, and a move towards professionalism in the workforce, a number of Muslim migrant women have also attained higher education qualifications from Western nations, with the hope that by creating better job opportunities and work prospects, they can enable themselves to effectively balance their family and work life commitments (see for example, arguments made by Ahmad 2001; Greenhaus and Powell 2006).

Work-life balance literature in the Western context: A critical review

The concept of WLB has been in existence for a little over three decades, yet there are numerous calls for reconceptualising and clarifying the purpose and outcomes this approach seeks to achieve (Gregory and Milner 2009; Tomlinson 2007). Fleetwood (2007), for example, highlights the limitations due the narrow discourses that dominate WLB literature. Even though one of the drivers for WLB was to manage childcare responsibilities by women, WLB

practices often involve men and the debates move from parenting to care by men versus women, whereas childcare is still perceived to be a woman's responsibility (Fleetwood 2007). Below we offer a theoretical discussion on this topic and highlight some of the major knowledge gaps.

WLB literature, in the main, narrowly focuses on the 'performative' goals of WLB (Beauregard and Henry 2009), which are often set to achieve a range of 'positive' and 'win-win' individual and organisational outcomes, often linked to a range of positive organisational performance measures. Some of the WLB discourses fix the responsibility on the individual's ability and choices they exercise in managing (or lack thereof) in achieving a 'balance', while others have tended to focus on organisational characteristics that allow or inhibit access to WLB opportunities (Lewis Gambles and Rapoport 2007) . In the main both the above discourses focus on an element of 'choice' in time and exercise of human agency, often assuming neutrality in WLB discourses in a number of relevant intersectionality issues such as gender, ethnicity, culture, nationality, age, sexuality (Collins 2015; Lewis et al. 2007). Often seen as a solution to modern day work-intensification problems, most WLB discourses attempt to serve a narrow group of employees, often silencing the needs and contextualised issues of the 'other', including minority groupings (ibid). Guest's (2002) review on WLB suggested that in the main, there are two key levels of WLB at play: work/organisational and home/family levels. Depending on the intensity of work and home cultural and related factors, the extent to which there is a need for achieving a 'balance' between these two domains, as the demands for WLB, will vary.

Dominant WLB theorisations

Although there are numerous WLB models, for example, segmentational, these can spill over and conflict with approaches of WLB (see for example, O'Driscoll 1996; Zedeck and Mosier

1990), some of these are relevant to our study of MMW in the West. For example, one of the earliest conceptualisations focuses on a segmentational approach, wherein work and family are seen as two different domains and that these should be kept distinctive. Such a conceptualisation is not exclusive to the West or in fact other parts of the World, however, the intensity of such boundaries are more profound and are often found in cases impenetrable for MMW due to the challenges intersectionality presents. Similarly, the spill over theory (Staines 1980), which argues that there are expected positive and negative spill overs from one domain to another, and as such these need to be understood and managed. In the context of MMW, often the institutional, national and cultural pressures facing MMW preclude them from fully benefiting from the positive spill overs of WLB. In most such cases, owing to the cultural pressures facing MMW, the negative spill overs are exacerbated. Conflict-based models highlight how the difficulties presented in balancing one domain leads to conflict in the other. For example, the most common forms of conflict described in the literature are: family-work-conflict and work-family-conflict. Conflict models incorporate the key elements of the above models and introduce the natural occurrence and consequences of conflict in WLB approaches. As such, conflict models offers some promise as they help identify and analyse various antecedents of WLB in the two domains (O'Driscoll, 1996). In the case of MMW, we argue that conflict takes the centre stage in WLB matters due to embedded, entwined and complex cultural and religious reasons. For example, the importance of a woman's role as a mother, wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law presents multiple opportunities for conflictual situations.

Building on conflict models, Clark's (2000) conceptualisation argues that family and work domains are both physically and temporally separated. Such thinking is relevant for our paper, as it allows us to analyse relationships at multiple levels. Clark proposed a new theoretical approach to understanding WLB, wherein he uses a 'border theory' of work family balance.

This theory can help analyse the boundaries between work and personal life at different levels (societal and family, organisational and individual levels). Once we can understand these boundaries and domains, it is easier to identify the extent to which individuals can help control the domains of each border and understand how it has an impact on the other domain. Clark (2000) developed several propositions surrounding the similarity of the domains, expressed in terms of the overlap in segmentation, integration, culture and values and strength of the boundaries between the two domains, which is expressed in terms of permeability, flexibility and blending. For example, Clark proposed that where domains are similar, weak borders will facilitate greater use of work-family balance. Similarly, where the domains are too dissimilar, strong borders will facilitate work-family balance. Ali (2015) describes the strong 'inside/outside' dichotomy in Pakistan (a Muslim majority country), where women are restricted to the 'inside' space of home and household. These boundaries restrict women's access to education, employment, training opportunities and social services. Further, even women with careers face the problem that they cannot live independently but rather require a male to look after them (Ali 2013). When such Muslim women migrate to the Western countries and choose to work there they sometimes face the issue of balancing work and life related issues due to strong expectations of their households to focus on family needs. In summary, Clark's (2000) conceptualisation helps us understand how boundaries of work and life are rigidly defined for MMW.

Managing WLB borders: Key enablers and barriers

Introducing the concept of *influence* and *centrality* in such a cross-domain movement, Clark (2000) further suggested that border-crossers or participants who move across from one border (work or family domain) will find such movement much easier if they have high levels of work domain centrality and influence. Participants who move from one border to another need to

have a good cultural understanding of their work domain, must possess responsibility in a group, have connections and interactions with peers in the work domain. In terms of work influence, participants must have personal competence, power and autonomy in making rational choices in their domain. In the absence of centrality and influence participants may find access to WLB policies difficult. This is a critical point in the context of this paper as migrant Muslim women from the East may not possess such levels of centrality and influence relative to their 'other' female and male co-workers in Western work settings.

MMWs have been noted to lack confidence and skills needed in several Western settings. To deal with institutional isomorphism, Pauwee (2004) suggested that organisations need to focus on active resistance by adopting a developmental and innovative approach to overcome pressures for conformity. He described this as active agency. We argue that individuals too can exercise such active agency, provided they have some leeway and exercise choice to overcome such institutional pressures. We argue that through higher education MMW can acquire new skills, competence and confidence that will allow them to develop their social networks and consequently develop a better cultural understanding of their work domain. The above will provide MMW the leeway and much needed choice for demonstrating their agency. Within the above body of literature there are work, personal and family domain factors that variously affect work and family life outcomes. Our interest in this paper, however, is to also understand how work, personal and family domain factors are related to WLB and other family-friendly work approaches.

Further, our interest lies in how WLB affects minority groups such as Muslim women, particularly migrant Muslim women working in Western nations. In a meta-analytic review undertaken by Eby et al. (2005), the researchers found that within the work and family domains, work/family relationships are extremely complex and that gender is intensely entrenched in research on this topic. There are significant differences between how men and

women experience work/family conflict and that the antecedents of such conflict also differ, for both men and women. For example, relative to men, women are lesser beneficiaries of WLB arrangements offered by organisations (Moen and Sweet 2002). In view of strong sex role stereotypes, it is not surprising to see that women are disproportionately affected, and such stereotypes often result in women having to restructure their work lives to fulfil familial demands as compared to males (Karambayya and Reilly 1992), as well as utilize any available flexibility in work to maintain WLB (Loscocco 1997) and quality of family life (Staines and Pleck 1986).

Having highlighted the key limitations in the vast and complex literature on WLB, we now discuss, how WLB issues of MMW can be better understood through the concept of intersectionality.

WLB and intersectionality

The term intersectionality mentions the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as a reciprocally constructing phenomena (Collins 2015). Further, Crenshaw (1991) argues that the 'location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes their experiences structurally and 'qualitatively different than that of white women' (Crenshaw1991: 1245). Similarly, others suggest experiences of Muslim migrant women (due to intersectionality of ethnicity, migrant status and religion) at workplace may be very different from their mainstream counterparts (Syed and Pio, 2010).

WLB has specific implications for people who face multiple disadvantages due to two or more layers of identity. While the overlapping of the protected characteristics of gender, race, and disability is of particular importance in terms of WLB but often ignored within legislation and consequently diversity management policies (Syed 2015). While the Equality Act (2010) in the

UK takes into account intersectionality role as a legal policy, this feature is lacking within legislation in the US where same-sex partnerships are not covered within the Family and Medical Leave Act, which is a central piece of legislation governing WLB.

Furthermore, research suggests that culture and ethnicity can also affect WLB. In a study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage women living in the UK, Dale (2005) observed that these women face greater challenges in achieving a balance between employment and family roles. This may be attributed not only to the style of work, which is arguably geared toward Western social and capitalist norms, but also to home, where traditional expectations of women as homemakers remain as common practice (Ali and Kramar 2015; Bradley et al, 2005). Similarly, many other issues arising from intersecting and multiple identities may be ignored within WLB policies, which mean that such workers may not fully benefit from governmental or organisational WLB initiatives (Syed 2015).

Research suggests that many British Muslim women choose to take time out to care for their children –but there is very little use of formal childcare (Akhtar 2014). Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers (who make up 75 percent of British Muslim women) are far less likely to be in employment either prior to having a baby or during the early years of their child's life than Indian, White or Black mothers (Ali 2015). Similarly a recent study examined the employment status of women among various immigrant ethnic and religious minorities in Canada (Reitz et al. 2015). Although greatest among Muslim immigrants, other groups including Hindus and Sikhs also exhibit greater gender inequality in labour force participation relative to mainstream Canadians, one of the reasons given is the presence of young children. The above literature identifies that Muslim women's experiences related to WLB may differ with other minitories or mainstream peers due to intersectionality of gender with religion. Hence there is a need to further investigate WLB issues of MMW.

Understanding Muslim migrant women (MMW) at work in Western Contexts

Building on the concept of intersectionality, in this section, we reveal the multiple challenges faced by Muslim migrant women because of the interweaving of work, gender, ethnicity, religion and country of origin and host countries' socio-cultural contexts. While there have been several studies examining Muslim women's attitudes and work-related experiences in their home countries (Brah 1994; Jamali et al. 2005; Madipelli et al. 2013; Rehman and Roomi 2012; Sidani 2005; Syed and Ali 2013), our understanding of MMW in Western contexts (Read and Bartkowski 2000; Syed and Pio 2010) is still emerging.

Hakim (2006) found high levels of workforce participation by women and friendly work-family policies can reduce the incidence of gender equality. Noor (2002) for example, in a study of 310 Malaysian women (of which, 230 were Malay Muslim women) with familial responsibilities found work-family conflict to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Examining the direct, mediated and moderated effects of locus of control on job satisfaction and stress, She found that locus of control was negatively correlated to work-family conflict and stress and positively associated with job satisfaction (ibid). Locus of control had a direct effect, partial mediating effect and a significant moderating effect on job satisfaction. In a study of Lebanese women's self-reported career paths (Tlaiss, 2014), of the 32 Lebanese women studied it was found that the uptake of modern management practices by most Middle Eastern women was limited uptake in Middle Eastern and non-Western societies and that only where individual human agentic processes was strong and positive, was there some openness to uptake and adopt new and flexible management practices. Rehman and Roomi (2012) found WLB to be an antecedent for women entrepreneurship in Pakistan as the need to manage family-work conflict and the institutional pressures associated in a male-dominated and patriarchal society, wherein a number of Muslim women resorted to small business and enterprise to support their family's financial needs. Examining entrepreneurial contexts, Essers

and Benschop (2009) explored how Morrocan and Turkish origin women negotiate the influences of Islam, national culture and gender in the Netherlands. Again, the impact of individual women agentic processes is seen as critical in balancing the tensions at the intersection of religion, ethnicity and gender in producing favourable outcomes.

The influence of socio-contextual factors on Muslim migrant women at work (Macro-Level)

Scholars have also highlighted the impact of national and cultural context on gender equality at work. For example, drawing on European data, Lyness and Kropff (2005) found that the degree of national gender equality is an important contextual variable that positively influences flexible work arrangement and supportive work-family culture. It is now accepted that national and socio-cultural contexts, such as countries of origin and host countries' cultures, influences migrant workers differently, hence it is imperative to consider it while studying migration theory (Hakak and Al Ariss 2013; Ali 2013; Syed 2008a). For example, studies on MMW in Australia (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007; Kabir and Evans 2002; Northcote et al. 2006) uncover the double disadvantage of ethnicity and gender as deterrents to participation. Scott and Franzmann (2007) discover issues pertaining to religious orientation faced by Muslim women in a 'secular' workplace. They identify mixed socializing, prayer times and spaces and the dress-code as barriers to working in the 'secular' environment as potential difficulties.

Besides visible ethnic and religious markers, Boyd (1992) notes that migrant women are influenced strongly by gender regimes in their places of origin. Marked by patriarchal values in some societies, Muslim migrant women are subject to specific demands in terms of family and household responsibilities (Preston and Giles 2004). For instance, Syed and Pio (2010) suggest that Muslim migrant women in the West, particularly those with family responsibilities, found complex challenges posed by the interweaving of ethnicity, religion, patriarchy, gender and migration, along with different family aspirations and lifestyles.

Although increasing levels of institutional and cultural pressures in Islamic nations have in the main, contributed to the uptake of traditional roles such as domestic and family care roles by Muslim women, this pattern however is gradually changing in light of new role reversals, wherein, a number of males are also undertaking domestic care roles when their spouses are at work due to economic pressures and cultural hybridisation associated with migration (Sav and Harris 2013; Sav et al. 2013; 2014). As Rowe and Schelling (1991: p. 231) define it, cultural hybridization refers to "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices". Inattention to the above changes in familial roles and reinforcement of strong patriarchal influences may lead to an ethnocentric application of Western WLB policies to minority groups such as Muslim women ultimately make such changes ineffectual.

There are significant differences between Muslim majority countries and Western countries in the cultural concepts of female modesty and gender segregation (Ali 2013; Ali and Knox 2008). This may have huge impact on migration of women from Muslim majority country to a Western country in terms of practices of such norms (such as modesty, inhibition) at workplace. Syed et al. (2005) have highlighted the impact of religio-cultural context on emotional labour and societal expectations of female modesty. In Islamic traditions, it is the responsibility of a husband to economically support his wife and children; therefore, there is relatively limited incentive and opportunity for women to engage in paid work. While Islamic law permits women to work, actual expectations of Islamic conditions for female employment and female conduct at a job are relatively stricter than those for men (Syed et al., 2005). Syed et al (2005) argue that while Muslim female modesty occurs as a value in many cultures, it is a particularly explicit and strong feature of Islamic doctrine. The influence of such cultural practices is huge on working women's lives. Particularly when Muslim women are working in Western country the practice of modesty and inhibition may lead to discomfort and uneasiness

of both Muslim women and their colleagues. This is explored in a study on Muslim women in Australian workplace where the majority of women agreed that they do not feel comfortable in non-Muslim environment especially when it comes to socialising (Scott and Franzmann 2007). The study further suggests that 'while not all respondents reported experiences of discrimination in the workplace, they were unanimous in identifying that their most pressing concern relates to attending social functions associated with work where alcohol is served and alcohol consumption is encouraged, either during office hours or at functions held outside office hours' (Scott and Franzmann 2007: 281). This lack of socialising due to religious reasons may hinder the process of networking at workplace which leads to other consequences affecting performance and career development (Ali and Kramar 2014). Aforementioned literature suggests that MMW face more challenging and complicated factors (such as modesty, inhibition and shame etc.) due to cultural and religious differences. Hence, it is necessary to understand such issues which have implications for WLB policies of such women.

The influence of employment contexts on Muslim migrant women at work (Meso Level)

Considerable literature shows that women's participation in the workplace is largely to contribute to household income (Jenkins 1992; Bhavnani 1994; Austen and Birch 2000). In a recent study conducted with Muslim migrant women in Australia by Samani (2013), it was revealed that almost all participants were working to support their families. For example, 3 participants working full-time revealed that they were the sole providers of the family; 10 shared responsibilities with their spouses for providing a family income; the rest said that they supplement the family income. Therefore, it is interesting to note that although in Islamic culture women are ideally expected to take care of house and children, the Muslim migrant women participate in labour market due to economic reasons.

Samani (2013) in her study on Muslim migrant women in Australia revealed that one of the ways in which women found that seeking employment was successful was through personal

and job-seekers' networks. Career guidance publications Bolles (2012) and Holland (2011) suggest that compared with other forms of job searching, networking (making connections with others) gets the best results for getting hired. Past experience was also one factor cited for getting into a secular workplace easily. Muslim migrant women who had been working in Muslim environment felt much easier to settle in new job (Samani 2013). Further, Muslim women who do not wear Hijab at workplace find it easier to settle in the workplace as compared to the ones who wear Hijab (Samani 2010). Nevertheless, almost all face anti-Muslim sentiments by peers at workplace. Anti-Muslim sentiments shared by colleagues can be confrontational and make Muslim women uncomfortable in the workplace (Samani 2013). Muslim women may face discrimination due to wearing religious clothing such as head scarf; this discrimination can take place at many levels such as recruitment and career progression (Reitz et al. 2015). In 2008, when she was 17, Ms Elauf was denied a sales job at an Abercrombie Kids store in Tulsa. She was denied the job because her hijab violated the company's 'look policy' in two ways: it was black, and it was considered to be headwear (The Guardian, 2015). Although she recently won the legal case however this depicts that there may be certain organisational policies due to which Muslim women face discrimination such as their religious clothing, which is not the case with other women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The discussion leads us to suggest that there is need to look at organisational level policies and practices that may discriminate a vulnerable group such as MMW.

The influence of individual attributes/attitudes on Muslim migrant women at work (Micro Level)

There is also evidence of flexibility in adapting religion in ways that are inspiring (Syed and Pio 2010; Ali 2013). Instead of following an orthodox patriarchal interpretation of Islam (Syed et al, 2005), women use their agency to practice religion according to the specific events

they are exposed to. Bandura (2006) refers to agency and being an agent as '… to intentionally make things happen by one's actions" (2006 p. 2). Therefore, agency can be defined as a force behind action and actors must be aware they possess agency and believe they can make change through exercising it. For example, the perception that Muslim women are not supposed to work like men but they do work due to many reasons such as economic factors (Syed and Pio 2010). A recent study on Pakistani Muslim migrant women in the UK shows how migration to the UK impacted upon their gendered social and religious norms and charts the changes which have taken place across the generations (Akhtar 2014). Based on primary empirical data the study argued that Pakistani Muslim women negotiated the context of migration and settlement to reproduce and modify traditional gender norms through examining changes in the religious sphere.

For MMW, from an individual perspective, it is pertinent to note that entering a new country with resettlement for self and the family, plus gaining employment can be a daunting task. For example, this leaves little room for coming to grips with employment legislation pertaining as well as equal opportunities and anti-discrimination laws (Syed and Pio 2010). In addition, fluency in the host country language is a strong predictor of migrants' chances of obtaining and keeping employment and of increased earnings levels, as an important factor of economic integration (Dustmann and Fabri 2003; OECD, 2003). A study by Ogbonna and Harris (2006) suggests that poor English language proficiency is a major contributor of workplace discrimination. This is also an issue Muslim women face in addition to race, gender and religious stereotypes (Syed and Pio 2010).

In a survey of 634 unemployed MMW in the UK, Dyke and James (2009) found that a significant majority (57%) of MMWs were seeking work. Nevertheless, owing to familial and cultural inhibitors, 39% of MMWs expressed their ability work. Of these, 2% believed that working was against their family 'honour' (or '*Izzat*' with emphases in Urdu, p.5), 49% said

their domestic responsibilities prevented them from working, another 24% said their inability to work was primarily due to lack of support from their husband and family members. This research concluded "…that these women are hindered in gaining employment less by unsurmountable religious or cultural influences and more by a fundamental lack of training, appropriate childcare facilities, tailored engagement and a basic lack of confidence" (Dyke and James 2009: p.6). In view of the above discussion it can be argued that MMW do use their agency and it is worth considering such agency to improve situation of WLB issue of this small yet significant group of women.

TOWARDS A RELATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

In terms of our relational understanding of WLB of MMW in the West, we present a multi-level understanding of WLB issues of MMW. This study was a critical review of existing literature on WLB with respect to Muslim migrant women in the West. Hence the study is not meant to be representative of all Muslim women in the West. Indeed, there may be many other experiences of Muslim migrant women which are not represented in this study. Future researchers might conduct more detailed investigations pertaining to identity, power, occupational structure, business cycles, accreditation procedures and their implications for Muslim migrant women and non-Muslim women. More needs to be established regarding how intersectionality impacts the choices MMW exercise in different contextual settings in relation to WLB. We provide below a table (See Table 1) that provides researchers with key future research agendas to better understand how MMW access WLB in Western settings.

Table 1: Key themes and future research agendas

Key Levels - Mechanisms affecting MMW to access WLB in Western settings	Future Research Agendas
Individual (Micro) - Skill levels, competence and qualifications - Socially network	*Future research is needed to confirm whether highly skilled, qualified and socially networked MMW are more likely to access and benefit from WLB and other family friendly policies offered by employers in Western workplaces*
Organisational (Meso) - Understanding of organisational culture - Knowledge of work domain - Human agency	*Future research is needed to confirm whether lack of centrality and influence in work domain and poor cultural understanding acts as a barrier for MMW in accessing WLB opportunities at work in Western settings.* *Future research is needed to confirm whether it is through active agentic approaches that MMW can fully access WLB opportunities in*
National, societal and cultural (Macro) - Intersectionality and interweaving affecting aspects of: - Gender - Religion - Culture - Ethnicity - Norms - Legislation	*Future research is needed to understand the complex relationships that exist due to the intersectionality factors and how these individually, collectively or through an interaction effect affect the ability of MMW to access WLB opportunities in Western settings* *Future research is needed to confirm which factors are more critical in certain contextual settings and whether there are multi-level interaction effects at a macro-level due to interaction with micro and meso-level factors.*

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While our review suggests an increasing focus on WLB issues of MMWs at a singular level, by developing a multi-level understanding such as the one presented above, we can advance the relationality in organizational studies (Ozbilgin, 2006). To this end, our attempt to present WLB issues of MMW at a societal/socio-cultural, organisational contexts and agentic levels

presents an opportunity to develop an integrated understanding of how various levels interact

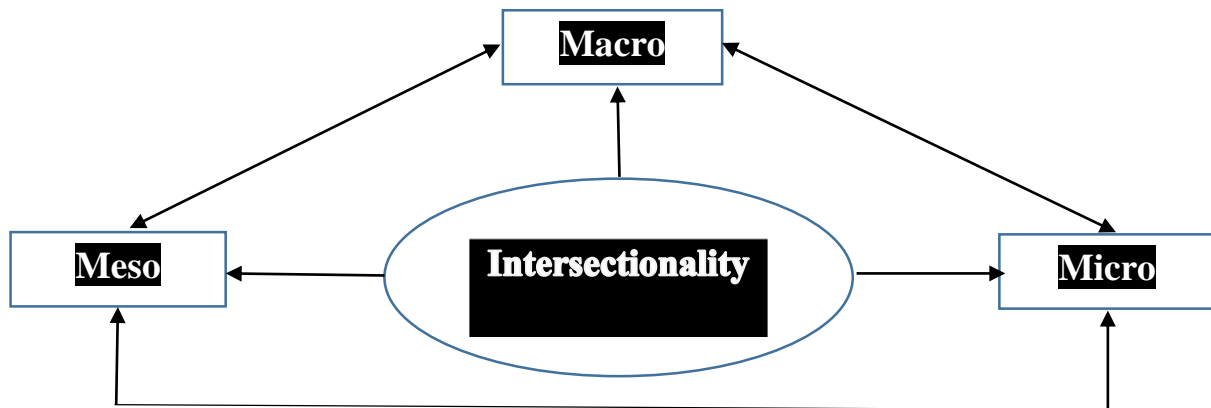and impact on the phenomenon under consideration. This is depicted through Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 A relational model depicting work-life balance of Muslim migrant women

Hence, as the literature suggests, experiences of Muslim migrant women (due to intersectionality of ethnicity, migrant status and religion) at workplace may be very different from their mainstream counterparts (Syed and Pio, 2010). Through our above model we build on the concept of intersectionality, and reveal the multiple levels of challenges faced by Muslim migrant women because of the interweaving of work, gender, ethnicity, religion and country of origin and host countries' socio-cultural contexts. Thus for example, the macro-level societal and socio-cultural factors inform the embedded nature of institutional and cultural pressures that MMW have to balance in a Western context. Further, operating at a meso-level, our analysis and review suggests that MMW have to develop certain skills and social networks in an organisational work context to make the most of WLB policies. The issues of the strength of their network at the workplace and their own centrality in a work group are critical for successful access of WLB policies and opportunities. Finally, at a micro-level or individual agentic level, we argue that case for MMW's agency needs to be considered in benefitting from WLB policies. Agency theory relates more to personal agency. Here, agency is not a discrete

entity in a particular place; rather, it reflects those endowments and self-regulatory capabilities that give rise to personal influence. Flexibility and skills of persuasion and self-efficacy will be extremely critical in achieving positive WLB outcomes by MMW in Western settings. So, although the macro-level environment for MMW is relatively more favourable in Western workplace settings, the ability of MMW are still somewhat constrained due to the traditional familial role expectations by their spouse and family members. Thus, we argue that it is through the ability of MMW to foster social networks, support systems and exercise agency that many favourable WLB outcomes can be achieved.

This research set out to undertake an integrated review of the literature by identifying the gaps and presenting a multilevel understanding of how MMW experience and manage WLB issues in Western settings. Undertaking a critical review of WLB literature, we identified the gaps WLB issues of MMWs in Western settings. Of the six WLB approaches, the conceptualisation by Clark was found to be relevant for MMW as it informed us how boundaries of work and life are rigidly defined for MMWs due to cultural and religious reasons. Clark's notion of influence and centrality was particularly relevant. We argued that in context of well-educated and networked MMWs who exercise active agency may more likely to benefit from an organisation's WLB policies. Future researchers may investigate further that in the case of those who do not exercise agency, are less likely to benefit from WLB policies.

Further, we set out to explore the nature and extent of WLB opportunities and challenges at multiple levels as presented by such environments and make sense of how context shapes the world views of WLB of MMW. The literature was analysed at three levels, namely: socio-cultural, employment contexts and individual attribute/attitudes of MMW. First, at a macro-level, our review suggests that MMW will continue to face challenges in uptake of WLB policies due to the interweaving of ethnicity, religion and gender owing to diverse socio-

cultural, religious, and gender norms in Western countries. Second, what can be seen at a meso-level (employment contexts), we suggested the importance of social networks for MMWs in Western workplaces and also revising organisational policies which may directly and indirectly effect MMW (due to their religious practices such as head scarf) in accessing WLB policies and opportunities. Third, at a micro-level, we offered a view how human agency can achieve positive WLB outcomes for MMWs and why it should be considered vital in achieving successful implementation of WLB policies

In light of the above, several managerial implications arise. Overall, for promoting equality, diversity and fairness at workplace and reducing the 'triple paralysis', which is often faced by ethnic minorities such as MMW, managers must first of all adhere to the prevailing equality and diversity laws and family friendly policies for WLB. Second, managers should consciously develop an awareness of equality. Equality does not necessarily mean treating everybody equally. Minority groups such as MMW need to be treated differently. Equal opportunities is one such way for ensuring equality. At a macro level, nation states should ensure that minority groups such as MMWs are integrated within the mainstream workforce. The study by Dyke and James (2009) has already highlighted the need for such social integration and support. Governments should also try to increase awareness among Muslim women of the benefits of formal childcare for their children through outreach programmes in schools, women's organisations and Mosques. At a meso-level, organisations will need to work alongside the state to ensure that WLB and family friendly policies are designed, developed and implemented appropriately. At individual level, perhaps MMW can play a very important and strong role to improve social networking and (active) human agency at workplace. This can be achieved through creating and attending ethnic minority or interfaith networks. Similarly MMW can arrange (with the support of their managers) cultural events such as *Eid* and *Iftar* dinners during *Ramadaan (fasting month)*. Finally, to advance active human agency, managers must provide

opportunities and motivational environment for MMW to develop their knowledge, skills and

capabilities.

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