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Agency and coping strategies for Ethnic and Gendered Minorities at Work

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Abstract

This study examines the comparative workplace experiences of twenty Muslim professional women from the United Kingdom and Australia classified as minorities in terms of their ethnic, religious, gender and migration status. Diversity as exclusion remains highly topical in extant diversity studies. For instance, Muslim migrants have often been stereotyped as sexually constrained, victimized, ignorant, poor, uneducated and tradition-bound. Muslim women may be highly discouraged if western workplaces are not conducive to social and cultural needs. By using human agency and coping theory, the study investigates the coping strategies of Muslim professional women, how they adapt, how they react and reflect on stressful workplace events such as discriminatory behaviour. Agency theory provides a basis by which to explore agent responses to organisational narratives in this study. Overall, the study finds that active coping and planning to deal with stressful events is important to ethnic minorities and that emotion-focused coping is used when less active planning is prevalent. The study lends support to the triple jeopardy effects of race-related ethnicity, work practices and gender. The findings pose challenges for Western feminist theory in terms of the interface between gender and religion and the freedom of expression of individual agents in the workplace.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the coping strategies of Muslim women professionals in respect of workplace inequality practices and behaviours through the lens of Human Agency Theory (Bandura, 2001). A secondary aim is to explore the extent to which Muslim women professionals are able to exercise their agency within workplace settings in response to Western stereotypical organisational and societal norms and deep-seated patriarchal customs. A number of research studies

indicate a direct relationship between religion, gender and work, particularly related to Muslim migrant women. For instance, Essers and Tedmansson (2014) adopted a postcolonial feminist perspective to study the narratives of Muslim businesswomen in the Dutch context finding that gender and religion are a significant disadvantage to these women (see also Essers, Benschop and Doorewaard 2010). According to Ghorbani and Tung, (2007), working women in the West continue to talk of ‘invisible’ barriers that impede career advancement with women having to ‘try’ harder. In a field experiment by Ghumman and Ryan (2013) of hiring practices in the US, the researchers found that applicants who wore a headscarf were less likely to receive job offers and call backs. Similarly, a study by Hutchings et al. (2010) of Arab Middle Eastern women working on international assignments found that non-Muslim countries’ citizens were prejudiced against female Arabian (that is generally Muslim women), who had more difficulty in coping with aggressive work environments. Kamenou, Netto, and Fearfull (2013) found that organisational commitment to equal employment opportunities in the Scottish labour market is questionable and that there is low awareness on the unique socio-cultural position of ethnic minority women. Similarly, Syed and Pio (2010: p. 130) found in a study of Muslim migrant women in Australia that given multi-level frameworks of diversity e.g., at the macro-societal, meso-organisational and micro-individual, policy planners should be cognisant of ethnic and religious bargains and the context from which these are formed. On the other hand, a longitudinal study by De Tona and Lentin (2011) of migrant women’s network groups in Ireland found that resilience and networking practices increased women’s agency and resourcefulness because network actions indicated strong intentional and collective agency for coping (and shaping) societal responses. This latter study may be highly relevant to advancing our knowledge about how different women cope in adverse workplace circumstances.

Scholars talk of the experiences of triple jeopardy, the connections between race, sex and employment disadvantaging Muslim women’s opportunities (Syed and Pio 2010; Mighty 1997). Syed and Özbilgin (2009) and Syed and Pio (2010) make explicit a framework which connects structure, culture and agency, the idea that gender, ethnicity and religion are ‘contingent relationships with multiple determinations and implications’ (2010: p.118) except that (and importantly), the socio-cultural perspectives connect ‘kinship, cultural and institutional structure within society’ (2010: p. 120). The literature however offers mixed messages about the experiences, effects and impact of patriarchal and religious mores on Muslim women in different contexts. A more recent multilevel study by Karam and Afiouni (2014) related to issues of gender and women working in higher education in the Arab Middle East and North Africa (MENA) reinforce a number of earlier studies (e.g. Metcalfe, 2007; Kelly and Breslin, 2010; Syed and Ali, 2010) that the pretext for diversity management and HR practice is based on the interplay between Islam, *urf* (custom) and patriarchal community plus other labour market structures, legal rights, and familial relations (Metcalfe, 2007; Moghadam, 2005). For instance, opportunities in employment and agency are restricted by traditional patriarchal structure in the centrality of the family as a main unit in society, recognition of the man as the sole breadwinner, code(s) of modesty restricting interactions between men and women while maintaining the dignity and reputation of the women and an unequal balance of power (see Metcalfe, 2007: p. 59). According to contemporary scholars, generalized patriarchal biases are embedded in cultural, religious and legislative arrangements leading to ‘systematic discrimination deriving from deeply entrenched societal norms combined with conservative interpretations of Islamic law’ (Karam and Afiouni, 2014: p. 506; Syed and Pio, 2010). Notably, discrimination of Muslim women within

the agency concerns of the current study is evidenced by reservations placed on ratifying the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) by MENA countries as noted by Karam and Afiouni specifically opposition to the sub-conventions of gender equality, property rights, and marriage and divorce rights (Karam and Afiouni, 2014: p. 506).

While scholars note that the ideals of a Muslim and a feminist are mostly not compatible (Syed, 2010), others promote the idea that the Qur'an and Hadith can be reinterpreted as equality between the sexes (Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, 2005 in Metcalfe, 2007). Postcolonial feminist theory criticises largely Western feminist text that portrays Muslim women as having little scope for gender equality; postcolonial feminists are suspicious of the western feminist claim that their interests are fully in common with those of all women (Golnaraghi and Mills, 2013: p.160). Western feminine text largely portrays the idea that Muslim women need 'saving' because they are 'sexually constrained, victimized, ignorant, poor, uneducated and tradition-bound (p.160), the basis of which is the 'third world women' contrasted with the western woman who has the freedom to choose their own actions and decisions. On the basis of largely western feminist text, the researchers might expect that the diaspora and concentration of Muslim women professionals may limit their agency in western societies. That is, ethnic minority professionals and managers do not have the privilege of 'implicit faith' in the organisations' recognition of their capabilities because 'third world' stereotyping places individuals in groups attributed with a set of characteristics that may not be favourable (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006) such that 'their capabilities and commitment to work are often questioned within organisations and society' (2006: p.156).

While previous research has acknowledged the inconsistencies (and influences) between the multi-level and socio-cultural approaches and their effects on Muslim women, both scholars and practitioners know little about the coping mechanisms used by these women (Ghumman and Ryan 2013; Syed and Pio 2010). There is speculation for instance whether the heightened inequality experiences of Muslim women is related more too predominately Muslim societies than mixed multi-relational western societies (Syed 2010; Jamali and Abdallah 2010; Littrell and Bertsch 2013). Scholars for instance know very little about the coping strategies of Muslim women although much is known about the range and effects of inequality practices in western societies more generally (Kramer 2012; Syed and Murray 2009; Syed and Pio 2010). The idea of coping draws from research in the psychology literature, that multi-dimensional coping relates to problem-focused or emotion-focused coping (Folkman and Lazarus 1985; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). People respond differently to stress through active coping strategies, alter or plan to cope through cognitive appraisal of a stressful workplace event, by seeking to reduce or manage the distress related to it (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989: p. 267). Coping strategies more broadly relate to Human Agency Theory (Bandura 2001; 2006), that people can plan for the future, act on the present, evaluate and modify alternative actions for desirable outcomes. For instance, Bandura posits the idea that agents can be intentional (acting intentionally or through self-interest) as well as exercise forethought (guide their actions in anticipation of future events). If this is so, one might expect that Muslim women professionals are able to challenge stereotypical behaviour on the basis of how they are subscribed by Western constructs not least limitations of Muslim diaspora by adopting an alternative set of behaviours that challenge Western-centric ideals.

While the analysis in this paper is at the meso-organisational level, it is possible that macro-societal and micro-individual influences will be evident in coping evaluations. For instance, how do ethnic and religious values influence the different ways of coping? How are these played out in places of work? Mostly, there has been limited attention paid to studying religious or ethnic-related minorities at work and modes of adaptation to Western cultures (Payne 2014). In addition, there is limited discussion on whether the working culture of society plays the more dominant role in influencing this cohort as a group and/or whether Muslim culture is more dominant in agency outcomes (Hutchings, Dawn Metcalfe, and Cooper 2010). What is interesting is that we know little about the coping strategies employed by this group, the extent to which they place limitations on their own agency and/or within known work practices, they are no less privileged than others.

This study is structured as follows. First, we examine the theoretical framework and develop the research questions. Second, the study is placed within the context of women more generally at work in Australia and the UK and relative socio-cultural norms that influence Muslim women. Third, we discuss the relationships between human agency theory and different kinds of coping that people use to tackle stress or stressors at work. Fourth, the study is outlined including the methodological approach taken. Fifth, the results of the research questions are detailed and analysed. Next, we discuss the findings in the light of human agency theory and coping and the implications for Muslim women professionals at work. We also discuss how the results inform or add to current extant and recent debates about Muslim women's agency and the context(s) in which this occurs.

Theoretical framework

Context: Employment Trends in the West and Muslim Women

In Australia, trends pertaining to the nation's female statistics illustrate that between 1994 and 2013, 50% of the total population was female (ABS 2014). In 2010, over half (that is 58%) of higher education students were female and women's employment increased steadily from 40% in 1979 to 53% in 2004 (ABS 2014). In 2014, the Australian female labour force participation rate was 59% compared to 72% of the male labour force participation (UNDP 2014). Generally, there are more educated women in Australia but this is not translated into equal employment and equal rights. Women earn approximately 82 per cent of male average earnings for instance indicating the percentage of women's progression into top management roles is slow (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2014). Similar trends are evident in other developed countries such as the United Kingdom where the female labour force participation rate is 56% compared to 69% of the male labour force participation. Women remain under-represented in leadership roles with only a small percentage (3.5%) as Chief Executive Officer, yet, as Cooke and Glass (2014) note, diversity practices are designed to facilitate women's transition to the top. In Australia however, women managers are increasingly represented in support roles rather than the profit and loss roles where promotions are more visible (French and Strachan 2007).

The number of non-Christian people increased considerably between 2001 and 2011. In Australia, Buddhism and Islam account for 2.5% and 2.2% of the total population respectively (ABS 2014). Here, Muslim women are among several minority groups. According to recent literature, Muslim

women in Australia and the UK are increasingly subjected to indirect forms of discrimination, often stereotyped as uneducated, uncivilised, submissive, criminal and extreme (Dahinden, Duemmler, and Moret 2014; Essers and Tedmanson 2014; Read and Bartkowski 2000) particularly since the 9/11 tragedy. These negative perceptions create a source of direct and not so subtle discrimination and unnecessary boundaries at work. It follows that Muslim women are more susceptible to discrimination at work due to double and triple jeopardy clearly identifying them as culturally ‘different’. In Australia however, this runs counter to the Governments Department of Immigration and Citizenship addressing issues of cultural, racial and religious intolerance through its Diversity and Social Cohesion programme.

Human agency theory

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 (Ling and Dale 2013). Human agency theory adopts an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation and change (Bandura 2006). According to Bandura (2006, p. 164), an agent influences one’s functioning and life circumstances. The agent is a contributor to their life circumstances, not just a product of them. Bandura (2001, 2006) highlights four core properties of human agency: *intentionality*, *forethought*, *self-reactiveness* and *self-reflectiveness* (Table 1). These properties encompass the agent functioning during the interactions of intrapersonal, environmental, and behavioural determinants.

Table 1: Properties of Human Agency Theory

Core Properties	Characteristics
Intentionality	Agency refers to acts done intentionally. Individuals can choose to behave in an accommodative way or, through the exercise of self-influence, to behave otherwise.
Forethought	Through the exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions in anticipation of future events. A forethoughtful perspective provides direction, coherence, and meaning to one’s life.
Self-reactiveness	Agency not only involves the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but the ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action.
Self-reflectiveness	People are not only agents of action but self-examiners of their own functioning; the metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions.

Adapted from Bandura (2001)

In Table 1, the core properties or features of agency theory relate 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. Intentionality for instance involves either behaving in a way that accepts the status quo through human inducements e.g., standard practices related to equal opportunity implemented in the workplace. But it may also involve alternative

behaviour in so far as the agent exercises self-influence. Similarly forethought; the agent here may simply conceive cognitively how some future state will relate to them in the present. For instance, Bandura notes that ‘behaviour is motivated and directed by projected goals and anticipated outcomes’ (2001: p.7). In Table 1, while people reflect on their experiences and learn from them so as to influence subsequent outcomes, agents can also exercise self-reactive responses. Intentionality is not only the ability to influence one’s outcomes but also to give shape to them, to motivate and regulate their implementation (Bandura 2001; 2006; Ling and Dale 2013).

A self-reflective agent will reflect upon the adequacy of their thoughts and actions with other agents by joining like-minded and or different groups. Agents could be expected to employ emotional support in social groups to support instrumental agency related to solving real problems. Here, a useful question to explore is whether a heterogeneous or a homogenous group provides more or less social support in facilitating greater self-reflectiveness when agents require advice about stressful events. If joining groups enable agents to facilitate one or more agency properties, is this more obvious in homogenous or heterogeneous groups? Research is mixed as to whether diverse practices and increased agent activities actually increases performance in a group (Ely, Padovic and Thomas 2012; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen 2010; Thomas 1999). Similarly, in adopting the idea of western feminists that view Islam and gender discrimination as intertwined (Syed, 2010: p.151; Syed and Pio, 2010; Syed and Murray, 2009) and that patriarchal restrictions offer little scope for gender equality for women (Golnaraghi and Mills, 2013; Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006), it may not be surprising that Muslim women professionals join homogenous work groupings for the maintenance of Muslim customs. For instance, *diwan* (a style of decision making representing a process of balance where autocratic relationships are respected) and *wasta* (the recognition that power in society is related to tribal and familial structures) are strongly gendered as Metcalfe (2007) contends because ‘these relationships are channelled through male connections and networks’ (p.59). Hence, it may not be surprising that agency decisions are grounded in religious mores that make it difficult for local women to assimilate and adopt western values and that the Muslim diaspora irrespective of its location may have largely homogenous effects. The distress related to certain workplace events may see Muslim women reliant on self-help homogenous work groups.

Research question 1: Are heterogeneous and/or homogenous work groups favoured in circumstances where agents seek greater social support and advice in stressful coping situations?

Given that agency theory is also about proxy agency (getting other people to act on one’s behalf especially those with more power) and collective agency (peoples shared belief in collective power), personal agency can be supported by one or more of these agency properties. According to Bandera (2001), ‘group attainments are the product not only of the shared intentions, knowledge, and skills of its members, but also of the interactive, coordinated, and synergistic dynamics of their transactions’ (2001: p. 14). According to Bandura (2012) people bring their action on what they can control directly, while in collective agency, people pool their knowledge and resources and act in concert to shape their future. According to the proxy agent setting however and the possibly of collective agency in expressing greater influence and voice (self-reactiveness), Muslim women as a group could be expected to increase and shape their workplace experiences for the better. In exercising agency within a complex situation, an agent will interact with other agents as generally people do not live their lives

individually. Therefore, coping strategies represent outputs that are revolving within human agentic properties of self-efficacy. Agents connect and interact with others in collective efforts to achieve stability in life functioning. These interactions determine the modes of human agency, either individually or collectively (Bandura 2012).

Research question 2: To what extent does group agency act as a proxy for coping for Muslim women at work?

Several foundational studies have noted how multi-dimensional coping strategies emerge from individual differences in which people respond to stress either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping (Folkman and Lazarus 1985; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). *Problem-focused* coping is about problem solving or doing something to alter the source of the stress through active coping or planning whereas *emotion-focused coping* (cognitive appraisal) is about reducing or managing the emotional distress associated with the situation (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989: p. 267). Models of coping represent a phenomenological approach. For instance in the race literature, the perspective of the victim of racial micro-aggression is critical in understanding subtle forms of discrimination (Hoggard, Byrd and Sellers 2012: p.330). Here, situational factors e.g., novelty, chronicity and duration, coincide with personal factors e.g., personality traits, personal history, and identity meaning that there will be inter-individual variation in the way individuals appraise and cope with similar events. Not all Muslim women will react or cope in the same way. For instance, Hoggard et al. (2012) suggest that in studies of racial stress, events are not intrinsically stressful but this depends on whether an individual experiences them as a threat or as a challenge (2012: p. 330). Interestingly, coping appears to be a response reflecting all Human agency properties except that intentionality and forethought properties relate more to problem-focused coping whereas self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness emotional-focused coping. Perhaps the former reflects more intentionality since agents deliberately invoke a coping strategy whereas emotion-focused coping reflects more subconscious choice since agents may or may not be able to think of an active coping strategy within a given problem situation. Hence, it is not surprising that in circumstances where agents are highly stressed, emotion-focused coping holds sway.

In building on this discussion, Carver et al (1989) advance a more nuanced theoretical account. Under problem-focused coping, actors might take additional steps to get rid of the problem or take direct action to get around the issue(s) causing the distress. This will be represented not only by active coping but also planning where actors seek to develop a strategy about what to do, how they might best handle the problem and make a plan of action. Seeking social support for instrumental reasons such as obtaining advice from others with similar experiences, talking to others about the situation, is equally important as obtaining emotional support such as discussing one's feelings and obtaining sympathy (Carver et al. 1989). Emotional coping factors include acceptance, turning to religion, denial and behavioural and mental disengagement. In previous studies by Holohan and Moos (1985) and McCrae (1984), behavioural disengagement reduced the effort to deal with the stressor by giving up goals that the stressor interfered with. The opposite of these coping actions is acceptance where an agent accepts the situation by attempting to deal with it (Carver et al 1989: p. 270), and/or turns to religion as a mediator for emotional support (Table 2), most likely when no active coping plan exists.

Research Question 3: How do Muslim women professionals at work use problem-focused coping to deal with stressful workplace events?

Research Question 4: How do Muslim women professionals at work use emotion-focused coping to deal with stressful workplace events?

We now describe the methods employed in the study.

Table 2: Agency properties and ways of coping

Core Properties	Behaviour characteristics	Ways of Coping
Intentionality	Agency refers to acts done intentionally.	Problem-focused: <u>Active coping</u> involves additional action to get rid of the problem; taking direct action; doing something about it <u>Planning</u> involves developing a strategy, a plan of action, what steps to take and how best to handle the problem <u>Seeking social support</u> asking people about similar experiences; they seek advice; they talk to others who could do something about it; they talk about their feelings; they seek emotional support from friends; they seek sympathy and understanding
Forethought	Through the exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions in anticipation of future events.	
Self-reactiveness	This multifaceted self-directedness operates through self-monitoring, performance self-guidance via personal standards, and corrective self-reaction.	Emotion-focused: <u>Acceptance</u> involves learning to live with the stressor; accepting the reality that an event occurred. They <u>turn to religion</u> as a means to seek God’s help; they find comfort in religion; they pray more than usual; They <u>deny</u> that an event occurred, pretend that it never happened; Turn to <u>behavioural disengagement</u> by reducing effort; they give up on their goal; admit they can’t deal with it <u>Mentally disengage</u> by turning to work or other substitutes; go to the movies or daydream about other things; sleep more than usual
Self-reflectiveness	People are not only agents of action but self-examiners of their own functioning.	

Adapted from Bandura (2001; 2006), Carver et al. (1989), Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Hoggard et al. (2012)

Methodology

The study focuses on exploring Muslim women agency coping strategies in response to workplace stress and inequality practices in both Australia and the UK. The researchers focused on senior Muslim women professionals from a cross section of professional occupations including health, education, science, law, social services and engineering. Common questions related to their experiences as a professional working in an advanced society enabled consistency in the sample experiences (Marshall 1996). Based on our analysis of extant studies, much research has been conducted about the discrimination and islamophobia of Muslim workers across different countries,

e.g., Kemenou et al. 2013; Jamali and Abdallah 2010; Mir, 2013; Littrell and Bertsch 2013; Syed and Murray, 2009, but apart from quite a distinct research focus on gendered women in management more generally related to gendered subtexts of discrimination within a particular western society, e.g., Bevan and Learmonth, 2012; Murray and Syed, 2010; Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008; Bendl, 2008, very little is known about how professional Muslim women cope with workplace stressors when the cohort is a minority as a percentage of the total number of women employed. To this end, the sample was carefully chosen to represent highly qualified Muslim professional women relative to their profession. For instance, approximately 80% of participants possessed a postgraduate degree and/or a discipline-specific degree, e.g., teaching. In terms of their work orientation, all participants needed to provide evidence of their professional standing. In order to protect local cultural values, advice was sought by the researchers from a local leader of the Islamic society. This advice provided greater contextual clarity of women's roles in Muslim society and how these values were portrayed at work. The process was also used to provide a protocol for dealing with cultural sensitivities as part of standard ethics approval.

Next, purposive sampling with snowballing techniques was used in the recruitment of participants. This first occurred by contacting a local Islamic agency and soliciting permission to contact professionals in the group. Each participant was then contacted by phone and email and permission for interviews were obtained. As each interview occurred, this led to a snowballing effect for new participants until at least ten interviews were achieved in each country. A participant information sheet was also used to protect the privacy of individuals. In each case, semi-structured interviews were used with all data recorded for subsequent analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. All interviews were conducted by a Muslim women professional represented by one of the researchers and/or as part of the research team. Typical demographic data was collected in relation to Hijab status, age, marital status, country of origin, academic qualification, number of years of residency and type of employment.

Common questions related to how women responded to discrimination and different work practices, how they plan for stressful events at work, whether work values and western cultures made a difference to their agency, how they change, plan or modify their behaviour in coping at work, actual coping strategies employed (if any), the role of religion and social support more generally. The researchers noted that all questions could potentially yield responses related to disengagement and that in reading and analysing the data, various coping strategies may be relevant to one or more agentic properties. To explore the data, research questions were developed from the conceptual framework with all RQs relevant for both the Australian and UK sample data. Interview transcripts were typed and transported to MAX-QDA, a qualitative software analysis program which enabled typical responses to be coded by agency theme(s) responding to the categories of agency and coping (Table 2). Using the Tables function to group key responses and themes around human agency properties and coping, sample responses were matched as by two researchers until typical responses representative of the data had reached saturation. For testing, we then transferred related quotes to each coping strategy. Accordingly, the researchers used judgement sampling to select the most productive evidence of coping relative to each human agency construct. We repeated the process for each transcript. Based on the data matched to each construct, the researchers were able to assess the answer for each research question relative to the compilation of responses. For example, research

question 1 and 2 was determined by the collective responses in A3 in Table 3; research question 3 by the collective responses in A1 and A2; research question 4 by the collective responses in B1 to B3. This process enabled the researchers to make inferences related to the data and to explore the contribution of the research to the theoretical relationships between agency and coping. Hence, we were able to avoid biasing the data by carefully matching and checking key information against each construct.

Similarly, subjects with specific experiences of being a Muslim woman at work enabled in some cases critical case sampling that helped build insight from case experiences. Subsets of data were copied into Thematic Tables which were checked and re-checked by the researchers to explore comparative data between countries and to formulate responses to each research question. Once these tables were prepared, they were again checked to ensure individual responses were matched to the correct themes.

Findings

All responses in both the Australian and UK data were matched in accordance with the sampling frame and broad themes. An example of typical responses is outlined in Table 3. It was then possible to draw conclusions about the core properties of human agency in respect of individual coping strategies as follows.

Heterogeneous versus Homogenous work groups

Research question 1 asked are heterogeneous and/or homogenous work groups favoured in circumstances where agents seek greater social support and advice in stressful coping situations.

In the Australian sample, there is little evidence of women seeking social support from strictly homogeneous groups. What is noticeable is the degree to which Muslim women seek to integrate into the local work culture or home group. For instance, a health expert is typical of responses:

I have a lot friends who are Muslim of my own group, and I also have friends who are not Muslim, we sit together, we chat together. And we enjoy each other's company, and they haven't been any kind of, what do you call it, friction between us, except that we do have very healthy dialogues (Medical Practitioner).

Many responses favour more heterogeneous and multicultural groups in the Australian data. As one woman explains: 'I just join any groups and I don't care about what the religion is. And I am very comfortable with the talking to anybody from any religion'.

In the UK by comparison, there are less comments attributable to different groups as a whole and more comments related to seeking social support from homogenous groups: 'Moreover, I talk to my Muslim friends for support when I encounter conflict with co-workers for instance. But I ensure I maintain confidentiality at all times because this is paramount in care' with one professional suggesting that her western colleagues do not interact with her because she wears a Hijab.

Table 3: Construct analysis of human agency and coping

Core Properties	Coping Strategies	Example of participant answers related to each coping strategy
Intentionality & Forethought Construct 1	<p>A. Problem-focused: <u>Active coping</u></p> <p><u>Planning</u></p> <p><u>Seeking social support</u></p>	<p>A1 Active coping: “I try to make myself flexible to a certain extent so that I do not completely behave as an outsider. However, I believe the extent to which you can change your behaviour will vary from person to person.” “I just try to be politer towards people who seem to have a problem with the fact that I am not British or that I am a Muslim. I do try to sort things out by being nice and talking things out.”</p> <p>A2 Planning: “I have particular passion for and am a great believer that striving to achieve the goals that you are passionate about leads to excellence and feeling of fulfilment.” “To be honest I keep it to myself. This is because I have to gather enough evidence to present in order to win the case. Without evidence it might back-flash. Another thing is that some staff call us foreigners who are not supposed to be in their country.”</p> <p>A3 Seeking social support: also Muslim groups: “I am the only Muslim employee at work but not at all averse to the idea of mixing up with my work colleagues both at work and in social setting, as we have a very good work environment and relationship.” “I feel pressures and stress can certainly sometimes counteract productivity and can lead to low morale and dissatisfaction and try to avoid having such influences by talking to good supportive Muslim friends, having a wing and a moan sometimes at work with colleagues and manager.”</p>
Self-reactiveness & self-reflectiveness Construct 2	<p>B. Emotion-focused: <u>Acceptance</u></p> <p><u>Turn to religion</u></p> <p><u>Denial</u></p> <p><u>Behavioural disengagement</u> <u>Mentally disengage</u></p>	<p>B1 Acceptance: e.g. “Sometimes it does. For example, you might have to shake hands with men. This is something our religion does not encourage, however, keeping in view the society and their norms, one has to do this so that it does not look rude.” “I sometimes feel it is a challenge to turn down invitations to or if they plan to have a drink together. I feel it is impolite not to join them but I have to avoid all such parties and celebrations due to religious reasons.”</p> <p>B2 Turning to religion: “I recognise my role of being in power and try to use this responsibly, ethically and with equality. Certainly and beyond doubt my Faith is the biggest driving factor in helping me cope both with stresses at work and in my personal life.” “Praying always makes me feel calm and gives me hope that things would work out, it also gives me courage to be content with what I have and be gracious for what I have.”</p> <p>B3 Denial: “In regard to western work values I would say I’m shaped by the code of conduct which appears to be implemented by the company. In this case I have to abide by the rules and ignore the bullying culture.” “Yes I suppose I do to some extent for example I dress smartly but do not wear clothes which are too obviously ethnic.” “However, if it does not seem to work, I just ignore that person’s attitude and carry on with my job.”</p> <p>B4 Behavioural disengagement: N/A B5 Mental disengagement: N/A</p>

Research Question 2 asked to what extent does group agency act as a proxy for coping for Muslim women at work? Narratives of collective efficacy and networking for the purposes of solving problems on behalf of individuals and/or using the group as a social system were analysed together with the ‘Seeking Social Support’ theme for research question 1. There is little evidence of group agency with Australian professionals but more evidence of proxy agency in the ‘planning’ to cope theme. For instance, a Housing Officer suggests that ‘before I take any actions, I will think how to encounter the person or situation....and I even consider to bring the matter or issue to higher level or management.’ Here, perhaps a need to seek a proxy for difficult situations is more prevalent when a stressor is evident. However, generally, there are few instances of both proxy and group agency in this cohort.

The UK cohort by comparison is quite different. Here, examples of proxy agency is found in both active coping and planning by not being afraid to report issues or stressful events and also being aware of them. For instance, a lecturer notes that ‘If I have to interact with or work alongside such a person who has discriminatory attitude towards me, I will normally refer it to the grievance policy.’ Similarly, a General Practitioner suggests that:

Therefore, in response to a bullying culture, I try to stay calm at all times...I ensure I provide standard care as stated in the mission of the company without forgetting to report any concerns to senior staff in charge of the shift (General Practitioner) (emphasis added).

The need for proxy agency in the UK may be related more to heightened awareness of racial and/or religious differences. Agency and forethought however is invoked in both cohorts since agents appear to have a planning strategy readily at hand.

Problem-focused Coping

Research question 3 asked how do Muslim women professionals at work use problem-focused coping to deal with stressful workplace events. Here, the question concerns all three problem-solving coping including active coping, planning and seeking social support.

Active Coping

In the Australian sample, there are many instances of active coping. Interestingly, nearly all active coping responses relate to religious concerns, values or traditions: ‘At first I refused some of the hand shake, you know, religious belief in that...that I will not shake hand with man. But then later on I had to be flexible. And it was kind of sometime taken as rude, if I didn’t shake hand.’ Similarly, a project officer explains that:

My colleagues also respect my values. A small example is that my colleagues know that I do not freely touch/shake hands with male individuals, and as a result they respect this value and maintain their distances (Project Officer).

Active coping is also related to patience, respecting the Australian culture because ‘we are in their country’ and in nearly all cases, not modifying or lowering religious values. Individual agents want to confront the challenges that exist (if any) and less inclined to avoid or deny them: ‘I don’t talk about my religion. But whenever people talk bad about Islam religion, I am around them, definitely I defend the religion. And I will explain to them.’

In the UK sample by comparison, active coping relates more to ‘being nice and talking things out’ and remaining calm in difficult situations while being committed to one’s work. Active coping means referring issues to supervisors and being aware of grievance policies while being ‘aware’ of possibly stretching their credibility as an agent of choice:

So if I am chairing a meeting *as a Muslim woman* I have to make sure that I follow the agenda strictly and talk. Similarly, at other meetings I only talk when necessary as I have to be extra careful of what I’m saying (Principal Scientist) (emphasis added).

The need for agents to ‘be careful’ highlights the importance of ‘place’ and ‘role’ and the reality of being a woman and being a Muslim. There is a progression from forethought to self-reactiveness given that demonstrated behaviour requires ‘acceptance’ of how one should act and assimilate. This invokes triple jeopardy, the idea that people respond the way they do on the basis of the effects of race, employment and gender.

Planning

For planning as coping, women in the Australian cohort think about what plan they will use:

He made a joke and that was kind of, I was sensitive to that, I didn’t said then and there because I didn’t know how to respond, I was new at the job. But later on, I kind of decided in my head that if something like this happen the next time, I will actually be very straight forward in my response (School Teacher).

Women were planning to have coffee, to discuss any issues the next time they emerged and to engage in more communication. In nearly all cases, women saw the issues as a challenge not a threat. A research fellow notes ‘It was difficult for me at that time to talk or communicate with people.....But I saw this as a challenge and so, I worked hard to learn and socialise with people to improve faster.’ Planning for Australian professionals seemed easier because ‘I can show people that I am a Muslim woman and I can grow as a person.’

In the UK sample, planning was mixed. In some cases, women were striving to achieve excellence and achieving goals as possibly demonstrated coping. In the other three cases, women were developing a strategy without being confident. There was a resignation that although they might plan how to respond to a stressful event, existing rules of thumb or ‘accepted’ practices were preferred:

When I have felt that I have not been treated fairly, I planned to resist next year when the allocation process and consultation takes place for the workload allocation. Again it did

not help much but I did convey my message to my line manager (Learning Support Officer).

One woman suggests that discrimination is forcing her towards self-employment: 'I started thinking about stop looking for jobs as it is very emotional, so I start thinking about finding a self-employment ideas where you do not have to deal with direct discrimination....there are other restrictions on what you can do or you cannot, so it is not trivial.' Similarly, Muslim professional women in the UK are concerned about a 'backlash' if they complain about their experiences of being a 'foreigner' in another country.

Emotion-focused Coping

Research question 4 asked how do Muslim women professionals at work use emotion-focused coping to deal with stressful workplace events. Here, emotional-focused coping concerns acceptance, turning to religion, denial, behavioural disengagement and mental disengagement (Table 3).

Acceptance

In the Australian sample, acceptance is in circumstances where woman acknowledge the past while getting on with the future in a more relaxed cultural setting. A school teachers explains that 'I do feel that in Pakistan when I was working, brought down my confidence, and I couldn't see eye-to-eye to any man...even if he was like a bigger age...I feel here, that issue is not present, I could just talk to a man, and be professional and be confident.' Similarly:

I do not wear Abaya here because I just feel so relax.... I don't feel that man are staring at me, feel very relax, very confident...and I feel I have much more opportunities in this non-Muslim environment than I am in Muslim environment (Early Childhood Teacher).

In the UK by comparison, acceptance of religious differences and keeping to religious values is seen as a consequence of living in a western society. Women professionals are strictly following their religious values but also accommodate the values of their host society. For instance, a general practitioner notes that '*I have* grown up in a Western culture so have learnt to be open minded and tolerant of other beliefs and cultures even if it goes against my personal values.' Similarly:

I have worked at my present job for almost 10 years...everyone at work knows I am a Muslim...I do not drink and don't eat pork or any meat other than halal...they all accept and respect that (at least they show they do), they always inquire if an eating place has vegetarian or halal (Senior Legal Counsel).

In both the Australian and UK cohorts, women are accepting the broader values of the macro-society while appearing relatively free to express religious voice.

Denial

Denial (and avoidance) in the Australian sample, which is the opposite of acceptance, appears to be in circumstances where women want to avoid feeling uncomfortable and don't always want to show their religious expression except at home. A Housing Officer notes that 'many times I have, many, many times, and in every single conversation with people...I have to be careful and to be very intelligent... even in answering, not to embarrass anybody.' Denial and avoidance in the UK sample relates to heightened vigilance as women do not want to appear 'too obviously ethnic.' Some see the need to 'work harder' and not complain 'because of our religion' as if working harder and not complaining will somehow avoid deleterious work stressors.

Turning to Religion

Emotion-focused coping such as turning to religion presents an interesting perspective of self-reactiveness and self-reflection in circumstances with less obvious active coping and planning to cope. Australian women professionals relate to two aspects of turning to religion: 1) seeking God's help to sustain them in their normal lives and as a guide to daily action, and 2) seeking God's help as an active and latent form of coping during and after a stressful event. The latter is more prominent in the data suggesting both a cognitive and behavioural form of emotion-focused coping:

There is nothing else...and by praying I am like I have firm faith that when we pray, Allah listens to us right...and he is the one who can resolve or problems...no one else can resolve our problems....If any work related issue or challenge comes up, I just pray to, pray to Allah, and I know that he is going to *help solve my problems* (Library Officer) (emphasis added).

Similarities between the Australian and UK data suggest close links between work stressors and turning to religion: "I recognise my role of being in power and try to use this responsibly, ethically and with equality...Certainly and beyond doubt my faith is the biggest driving factor in helping me cope both with stressors at work and in my personal life.'

Behavioural and Mental Disengagement

Disengaged coping acknowledges that no behavioural coping strategy exists. Notably, there are few instances of both types of coping in Australia and the UK. One exception is a Project Officer who suggests that 'definitely, definitely, yes... because I don't feel that I can be open about being a Muslim and I don't feel that I can wear the hijab at work...Western values do have a huge influence on being a Muslim.' Similarly, another professional notes: 'If I can close my eyes I will...so I mean I want defend myself, I hate that I don't defend myself, I saw that.... So sometime you to have be deaf and blind...so you can manage in western countries as a Muslim.' This is in direct contrast for the great majority of participants where mental disengagement is not evident. Disengagement here emerges when women have no active coping mechanism and have no plans related to how they will cope.

Discussions

The aim of this paper was to explore the coping strategies of Muslim women professionals in respect of workplace inequality practices and behaviours through the lens of Human Agency Theory (Bandura, 2001). A secondary aim was to explore the extent to which Muslim women professionals

are able to exercise their agency within workplace settings in response to Western stereotypical organisational and societal norms and deep-seated patriarchal customs. Secondary analysis related to how ethnic and religious values influence different ways of coping and how they are played out in places of work? Previous research on Muslim business women have drawn attention to the relationships between gender and religion and feelings of rejection, discrimination and disengagement (Essers and Tedmanson 2014; Essers et al. 2010). Previous research has unequivocally pointed to the racial and religious divides between Muslim women and workplace situations mostly reinforced by institutional structure, culture and agency (Acker 2006; Syed and Pio 2010; Hoggard et al. 2010; Pope 2012). Thus, given much extant and historical knowledge, it is not surprising that scholars have sought to place these narratives in broader frameworks that connect the macro-institutional, the meso-organisational with the micro-individual level of analysis (Syed 2008; Syed and Özbilgin 2009). While we are much clearer about the multi-level relationships, what has been less clear is how agents cope in specific circumstances. Accordingly, the connection between the Human agentic properties of intentionality and forethought help enlighten analysis of actual coping in practice such as active coping and planning to cope including how agents experience and appraise stressful events consistent with other studies (Smith and Dust 2006; Utsey et al. 2007; Linnaberry et al. 2014). Similarly, self-reactive and self-reflective properties place greater emphasis on why agents revert to emotion-focused coping although the construct does not necessarily possess linear relationships. Agents might forego deliberate intentionality by adopting a self-reactive emotion-focused coping strategy such as turning to religion particularly in circumstances where problem-solving coping doesn't exist.

In building on the idea that individuals will join groups for the purposes of collective agency and representation including the advantages of networking (research question 1), our findings demonstrate that professional Muslim women join any multi-cultural group not necessarily for gaining support or seeking help and/or advice. This runs counter to the idea that Muslim women are restricted in Western settings because of certain customs and traditions related to familial and patriarchal structures as outlined earlier. According to Western feminists, gender inequality and religion are closely intertwined suggesting that there is little possibility of Muslim women being able to express their ideologies, stand firm within their customs and reject Western values propagated in places of work. To take this one step further, for Western feminist studies, it is highly improbable, although not impossible, for Muslim women to express their agency at all since both stereotypical Western constructs limit such expressions added with the idea that religion and custom hold sway over agency outcomes. We find many instances where the opposite is the case consistent with the stance of Islamic feminism scholarship that reinterprets the Quran and Hadith in a positive light as outlined by Metcalf (2007) stressing equality between the sexes (see Badran, 2005 and Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, 2005 in Metcalfe, 2007: p.59). While we cannot exactly say that active coping and planning to cope resulted from positive influences at home (and in society) where women agency and decision making was not limited by patriarchy, custom and tradition (this was not the basis of our research questions), our findings nonetheless suggest a strengthening of ties between agentic behaviour at work and the freedom to express opinions while maintaining and upholding religious beliefs.

Since active coping and planning to cope are both deliberate and intentional agency decisions, this is a far cry from Muslim women depicted as oppressed, victimized, tradition-bound and sexually constrained (Mohanty, 1988, in Golnaraghi and Mills, 2013: p. 160). To be sure, the UK group seemed more constrained than the Australian cohort. Joining groups relates more to friendship than group agency and decision making with social support related to friendship, talking and chatting, working to live, learning from others in an integrative more heterogeneous environment. The UK cohort illustrates the importance of talking to Muslim friends when conflicts are encountered. Thus social support in homogenous groups is more dominant in the UK than Australian groups, quite possibly pointing to macro-societal influences and patriarchal settings. Few studies can be used as a reference point for Muslim women. However, to the extent that women seek social support as a means of coping in times of religious/work related stress may be related to their own health outcomes (Utsey et al. 2007; Utsey et al. 2000) as much as highlighting triple jeopardy effects.

Following Bandura (2001; 2006), the researchers expected that Muslim women would not only exercise individual agency but reflect a stronger reliance on proxy and group agency (research question 2). This expectation was also consistent with prior discussions of Muslim diaspora and the restrictions of Muslim women's agency in Western culture and the reliance on others. As noted by Bandura (2006: p. 165), individuals might influence others who have the resources, knowledge and means to act on their behalf to secure the outcomes they desire. We found little evidence of group agency problem solving quite possibly due to the cohorts professional orientation. We found no circumstances in the data where proxy agency was invoked. While studies highlight many supportive benefits from networking, we find that groups are not used strictly for these purposes in both the UK and Australia. In the UK sample, proxy agency is referred to in times of conflict and workplace stress such as bullying and unresolved differences but actions seem to be seldom carried through. Perhaps this finding might also confirm the influence of *diwan* and *wasta* in the Muslim space suggesting that Muslim women's individual agency might not be as important as male groups and networks and that Muslim professional women are cognisant of local mores and customs consistent with their religious beliefs. Significantly then, and in response to research question 2, intentionality and forethought are noticeable agent responses at the individual level but not so much at the group level. Homogenous groups in our sample do not take precedence over heterogeneous groups.

Our findings (research question 3) suggest similarity in assessments of possible stressors for active coping in both the UK and Australian cohort. Here, we noted many examples of active coping as a challenge with women wanting to address these concerns either by discussing them directly, not lowering their standards, speaking out and/or exercising patience with their work colleagues. Interestingly, while patience and respect were dominant in the Australian cohort, being polite, being nice and staying calm were more evident in the UK. Indeed, the findings of RQ3 appear to be consistent with the findings of RQ2. According to Carver et al. (1989), active coping concerns removing or circumventing a stressor at work to ameliorate its effects including implementing a coping attempt in a stepwise fashion, taking direct action or increasing individual effort (1989: p. 268). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) note that cognitive appraisal and coping are evaluative processes used to determine if a stressor or event about to be encountered exceeds individuals' resources to cope. In building on this idea in their research of racial discrimination in African American College students, Hoggard et al. (2012: p. 330) suggest that individuals who see the situation as a challenge

will use a coping strategy whereas those who see it as a threat will have a different assessment such as emotion-focused coping. The appraisal process along with person and situational characteristics determine which coping strategy is used (2012: p. 300).

As noted by Carver et al. (1989), Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Hoggard et al. (2012), planning differs conceptually from active coping because it occurs mainly in secondary appraisal but is still regarded as a challenge rather than a threat. Our findings provoke some differences and useful reflections. In the Australian cohort, women noted how events or situations were potentially stressful. Many comments related to a lack of communication, joking around or curious questioning by work colleagues prompting women to think about how they would respond. In planning to cope, women professionals 'planned' to talk with the offender, discuss things through with many seeing potential points of difference as a challenge. By contrast, UK women professionals, while planning to cope, saw stressors as a threat with a less convincing plan of attack how to respond. Importantly, in both active-coping and planning, we found evidence of triple jeopardy. Here, women professionals were seeking to alter or adapt their behaviour on the basis of perceptions about their work, their religion, their gender. While responses often appeared more playful than dramatic, they represented direct challenges to individual agency. Yet, as noted earlier, the ties between Muslim women professionals being able to freely express their agency concerns and at the same time maintain their values in noticeable. Agency intentionality is reflected in active coping and agency forethought in planning to cope. The forethoughtful Muslim women professional shows many instances of planning to cope by adopting behaviours related to providing greater direction, coherence, and meaning to one's life. But we also noted many instances of deliberate intentionality where agents either exercised self-interest and/or acted in an accommodative way. Bandura (2001) highlights how outcomes are not only the characteristics of agentive acts but also the consequences of them such that the power to originate actions for a given purpose is the key feature of personal agency. For instance, in the play *Hamlet*, Bandura discusses how consequences go wrong when a melancholy Hamlet intentionally stabbed the man behind the tapestry believing it to be the King only to discover that he had killed Polonius (2001: p.6). In the current study, what is noticeable is that Muslim women professionals are able to influence their workplace outcomes for the better which promotes the idea of a free, relatively gender-neutral agent who can plan ahead, reorder their lives and anticipate the consequences of their actions.

Emotion-focused coping encompassed acceptance, denial, turning to religion, and behavioural and mental disengagement (Research question 4). In building on earlier research by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and specifically related to denial and acceptance research by Mathews et al. (1983), Carver et al. (1989) note that acceptance is the opposite of denial which is denying the reality of an event. Acceptance concerns two conditions. One is the acceptance of a stressor in primary appraisal and the second the acknowledgement that an active coping strategy is absent meaning that acceptance occurs in secondary appraisal. In building on the idea of Bandura (2006), agents seem to be switching from intentionality and active coping to reducing stress when they don't possess a coping strategy by turning to religion. This interplay between human agency properties represents an important observation of agentic assessment. While active coping suggests that a workplace stressor can be changed, agents in both the Australian and UK groups appear to have little choice but to accommodate the stressor.

Extant studies indicate that turning to religion presents a dilemma since it may be deemed active coping when confronted with a stressful event or a form of emotional support as a means to reduce stress (Carver et al. 1989). In previous studies, the consistency and depth of church involvement providing social support has been a consistent predictor of well-being among Black professional women (Linnabery et al. 2014: p. 546). Also, the importance of religion in people's daily lives cannot be underscored as a unique source of faith and support (Mir 2013; Syed 2010; Flannelly et al. 2010). What was more pronounced in both the Australian and UK cohorts was the idea of turning to religion as a means of active coping (resolving problems, facing challenges, helping coping) but also as a means of reducing the distress associated with work issues. Thus both self-reactiveness and self-reflection represent common agent responses to workplace stressors in the data. We found very little evidence of behavioural and mental disengagement in situations where a stressor interferes with workplace goals.

A significant finding in this study is the interrelationship between Human agency properties and coping strategies. This occurs as professional women demonstrate intentionality through active coping/planning but also self-reactiveness/self-reflectiveness and emotional coping in at least three situations: 1) when they needed to reduce stressful events perceived as a threat (the UK) or a challenge (Australia) and/or 2) they could not reach for a ready-made coping strategy invoking more emotional-focused coping such as acceptance and turning to religion, and 3) there was a direct relationship between challenging workplace events and being Muslim and female. A fourth finding builds on the third point which challenges the notion of the western feminist ideal that it is difficult to separate gender from religion in workplace settings typifying the Muslim women as oppressed, victimized, tradition-bound and so on. In instances of intentionality and active coping and forethought and planning to cope, we found a strengthening of the ties between women's increased agency and freedom of expression and the maintenance of religious custom perhaps challenging the notion of western privileged discourse as developed, superior and modern while constructing images of the non-West as inferior, backward and archaic (Prasad, 2006 in Golnaraghi and Mills, 2013: p.160). This finding was not however uniform. In the UK sample in particular, triple jeopardy was more obvious. At work, there are instances of being quite sensitive to co-workers, of overt discrimination in the way work is organised, with women having to plan in advance how they should respond. Strategic adjustment in behaviour was needed more so in the UK cohort than in Australia, reflecting a more omnipresent sense of racial vigilance. Assessments of coping for instance in the UK were often based on perceived threats; in Australia, stressful events were seen more as a challenge with quite significant evidence of active coping. In the Australian cohort women are patient, staying calm and respectful while planning to 'talk things through' whereas in the UK, there is a greater need for being polite, being nice and staying calm by avoiding talking about issues and heading straight to workplace grievance procedures. In the UK cohort in particular, intentionality relates more to planning to cope than active coping with evidence of covert or subtle discrimination; self-reactiveness lies somewhere between outright denial and uncomfortable acceptance.

Conclusion

In summary, the four human agency properties underpin the interplay between different coping strategies employed by professional Muslim women at work. To this end, we found that professional

Muslim women predominately employ intentionality and forethought by active coping and planning strategies to confront stressors embodied within workplace events. They also seek social support as a means of problem-solving coping in heterogeneous groups. While there are instances of seeking social support to solicit advice, this is mostly for friendship and moral support than discussing stressful events; there were some instances in the UK sample of seeking social support however for means other than friendship. For emotion-focused coping, we found dominant responses around acceptance and turning to religion except that acceptance was not in circumstances of highly emotional events. Similarly, turning to religion related to both planning to cope and emotional coping in response to workplace events. While there is evidence of increased professional courtesy and respect of Muslim women in both UK and Australia, the pre-text for coping is tied to the perceptions of being a Muslim women working in a western environment with women having to 'try harder' or 'work hard' to demonstrate their agency. Interestingly and in support of our overall findings, we found very little evidence of behavioural and mental disengagement.

Limitations of the Research

This research is limited by a smaller sample size, the focus on professional Muslim women as distinct from other Muslim groups such as non-professionals, and only two Western countries (Australia and the UK) where other countries may yield a different set of findings based on the multi-level frameworks of diversity and how they intersect. Future research might also involve mixed-methods research seeking to validate theoretical coping models with human agency theory. For instance, factor analysis may help to validate various coping scales as a means to focus more acutely on which coping factors yield stronger correlations and how these relationships are played out in explanatory variables. The current research however focuses on addressing a widening research gap on the different coping strategies Muslim women use to confront significant stressful workplace events.

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