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Leading like the Prophet: American Muslim Millennials Finding Purpose at Work

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study aims to understand the spiritual motivations for leadership among American Muslim millennial organizational leaders. There has been limited research into the role of leadership development and the intrinsic motivation of young American Muslim professionals.

The theoretical framework of this study aligns with Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory. Spiritual leadership theory invites people to find intrinsic motivation in their values, beliefs, and visions while being inclusive of other motivational theories in the workplace. Fry (2003) developed a model of spiritual leadership that recognized one's spirituality as a crucial motivating factor that can lead to better organizational outcomes, such as employee motivation, reduced turnover, and increased productivity (Fry, 2003).

This study takes a descriptive approach to researching these practices. Descriptive methods focus on the lived experience and wisdom of human beings; they provide insight into the perspectives of participants (McCabe, 2020).

This study found that leadership in Muslim Student Associations (MSAs), role models, and spiritual practices all motivate participants. The MSA provides an opportunity to find one's spiritual purpose and to develop leadership skills by serving on the board or various committees. Role models provide context for young leaders to incorporate spiritual purpose into their leadership roles. Moreover, spiritual practices motivate by helping young leaders seek God's assistance in decision-making to overcome stressful situations.

This study contributes to leadership and motivation by showing how qualitative data from young Muslim leaders correlates to theories on spiritual leadership and millennial leadership

development. It also validates the impact of Muslim Student Associations on college campuses inbuilding organizational leaders.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As baby boomers retire, there is a significant leadership gap in Fortune 500 companies. Millennials are inheritors of some of these roles; but at times they need more encouragement and guidance to take leadership positions (Zaharee et al., 2018). In fact, the challenge of workplace motivation among millennials costs companies \$30.5 annually (Adkins, 2023). Among the most significant issues millennials present as a barrier to workplace motivation is a lack of purpose or meaning behind their work (Wood, 2019). Yet among millennials, the American Muslim community is unique, as many in this group are motivated by their spirituality (Jolliffe & Foster, 2021). However, according to Chowdhry (2018), there is a severe leadership gap across Muslim communities as well; and there is a need for more leaders that serve in a variety of capacities, from civic to professional roles. The lack of strong institutions, training and effective community building contribute to leadership gaps. Factors that contribute to this gap include negative pressure from Islamophobia and the lack of knowledge of the field of leadership development (Chowdhry, 2018).

American Muslim leaders have many backgrounds, share unique but diverse experiences, and are ethnically the most diverse faith community (Iqbal, 2016). This generation is not only diverse in ethnicity and cultural heritage they are also digital natives which separates them from past generations, and they gain the bulk of their insights from social media (Iqbal, 2016). One can find Muslims driven by their faith as they serve in roles in numerous industries (Iqbal, 2016). However, little research is available on the Muslim leadership experience that speaks to the American landscape and the unique challenges (al-Islam, 2006). The study of leadership as a discipline is a new venture for the Muslim community. Little academic literature focuses on the

critical leadership factors that are relevant for an emerging group of young Muslim professionals keen on upholding their values while also growing in their leadership capacity (Jolliffe & Foster, 2021). Recent studies on Muslim leadership principles focus heavily on theories. However, there has been less focus on incorporating practical examples and leadership storytelling, which can drive the connection between theory and practice (Armstrong & McCain, 2017). The existing literature needs to examine everyday stories and specific examples of successful individuals. Alongside the challenge of practicality, there is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, accumulated over past decades from older generations of Muslim organizational leaders in the United States, which has not been documented and can potentially be relevant for younger leaders striving to find their way.

Chowdhry (2018) notes that moral thinking and systematic approaches are critical to developing future American Muslim leaders. Tuerwahong and Sulaiman (2018) argue that one of Islam's goals is to be mindful in front of God. However, little research exists on young American Muslim professionals' spirituality-based leadership practices. This dissertation will focus on understanding the spiritual motivations for leadership among American Muslim millennial organizational leaders. The study can help young American Muslims develop a leadership perspective early in their career—potentially leading to higher motivation, satisfaction, and success.

According to Mubarak (2007), young American Muslims may not have had a religious experience growing up until they reach college, where they find themselves with like-minded people in groups such as the Muslim Student Association, where they have an opportunity to discover their identities and test out different ideas to begin to analyze perspectives for themselves. According to Mubarak (2007), this experience redefines spirituality for many and

transforms their viewpoint, and they genuinely discover their spiritual identity. However, their spirituality can be diminished when they leave college for the workplace. They no longer have the friends they used to see daily, nor a spiritual chaplain who can guide their inner journey, and they may miss out on a community space that reinforces their spiritual growth. Once American Muslims have left their college campuses and begun to enter a workspace, they lack the opportunities for spiritual development that could inform their leadership. However, there is limited research and guidance for young American Muslim professionals between the ages of 25 and 30 in their new postgraduate lives.

Although there may be significant research related to millennials and leadership, a spirituality-focused perspective may allow young Muslims to develop concepts of leadership that align with their values. Tuerwahong & Sulaiman (2018) argue that Muslims find much more intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation due to the importance of spiritual values in their lives. Such spirituality is critical because it gives young Muslim leaders the motivation they need to excel in their roles. Rather than pursuing one's career separately from a spiritual journey, the goal is to align these experiences and formulate a perspective that provides spiritual insight into everyday leadership, potentially leading to excellent workplace motivation.

The higher purpose for Muslims is to live a spiritual life. Combining one's spiritual intentions with everyday leadership provides "God-consciousness," a commitment to ethical behavior, and a commitment to constant improvement (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). By developing a leadership perspective, young Muslims can build their leadership capacity, lead organizational change, and uphold their values. A spiritually grounded Muslim leader can understand the spiritual and ethical commitments to leadership alongside the hard and soft skills needed to lead an organization, community, or business (Tuerwahong & Sulaiman, 2018).

Background of the Study

As American Muslim millennials graduate and become part of American society's mainstream workforce, they remain new to the leadership development space. For example, before a student named Babar joined the Muslim Student Association, he was frat boy who found purpose in partying. After meeting leaders from the Muslim student association, he found himself challenging his habits and lifestyle choices; and by the time he was in his last year of college, he became the President of the Muslim Student Association. Among his role models that prepared him for this position were past Muslim Student Association leaders that invested their time and effort into mentoring him. Babar found a spiritual path and direction in his career due to the role models in the Muslim Student Association.

There is not much research on American Muslims as a whole, and this research is far more limited within leadership development. According to al-Islam (2006), to be successfully established, new American Muslim studies must revolve around the experiences of people who understand the American Muslim community. Furthermore, according to al-Islam (2006), leadership expertise is a critical content area for American Muslim studies, specifically in leadership development. This study seeks to address a gap in the literature by navigating Muslim leadership perspectives and contemporary leadership practices.

This demographic of emerging young leaders in the American Muslim community is relevant because they are the largest group of American Muslims, with over 60% between 18 and 39 (Pew, 2017). This study will focus on young Muslim leaders between the ages of 25 and 35. This age range was chosen to reach millennials who are emerging leaders while they are early in their careers. These young American Muslims are inheriting the mantles of leadership while remaining committed to a 1,400-year-old religion that spans the globe (Pew, 2017). However, there is little research on how they can advance their leadership skills in the American context. In

addition, the American Muslim community has been at the forefront of controversy for decades, beginning with the emergence of radical groups and the post-9/11 world; young American Muslims have felt pressured to be spokespeople for Islam in the sense that whenever there is a terrorist attack or negative media coverage the spotlight falls onto them (Ashraf & Nassar, 2018).

A lack of Muslim representation in mainstream media has given a voice to extremist groups, causing everyday Muslim leaders to further lose their voices (Perreault & Paul, 2019). Along with that, many young American Muslims are victims of bullying and social pressure, and some lack an understanding of how to blend spirituality with leadership (Ansary & Gardner, 2022).

Another key reason this study is critical is the young leadership gap within the American Muslim community. Most leadership roles within Muslim-led nonprofit organizations are currently held by older members (Bagby, 2020). There needs to be more of a transition to a younger generation in shaping the future of these institutions with significant influence and assets that benefit the community (Bagby, 2020). As the Muslim community continues to mature and connect to the American context, it becomes critical that younger leaders take ownership of their future to become organizational leaders in their communities and workplaces. The path to leadership involves being part of executive leadership in corporate America and creating impact at the highest levels. The ability of young Muslim leaders to take on roles within influential companies can potentially bring significant power not only to the individual but also to the Muslim community, which is seeking to find itself part of the American mainstream.

Finally, young American Muslims must understand what motivates them if they plan to advance in their careers (Febriani, 2021). Because Muslims' values are a major motivating factor

in various aspects of their lives, it is beneficial to see leadership as a spiritual activity (Tuerwahong & Sulaiman, 2018). As a result, the Muslim leader will find new meaning in his or her daily interactions, and employers can benefit from having a motivated employee who is satisfied at work (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). Companies can potentially also empower their Muslim employees by providing them with culturally competent leadership training such as the incorporation of diversity initiatives in professional development programs. These programs could look like training American Muslims on self-awareness or ethics and bringing in a corporate trainer that understands leadership in a Muslim context.

Problem Statement

The brief introduction above suggests that millennials struggle with motivation and companies are struggling to recruit younger leaders yet there is a group of American Muslim millennials that are highly motivated by their spirituality and faith particularly in corporate America. Recently, there have been conversations around millennial motivation and the challenges that a new generation of the workforce faces, and researchers have been studying this arena in-depth. However, an area that is not explored enough is spirituality's role in millennial motivation, particularly among American Muslim millennials. The existing body of literature speaks to the broader trends; but the problem is that little is known about how American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership. If organizations can understand these perceptions, they may be able to leverage spiritual factors that motivate millennial Muslims to engage in leadership roles.

Purpose Statement

This descriptive qualitative research study aims to understand how American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership. There has been limited research into the role of leadership training and the intrinsic motivation of young American Muslim professionals. Most existing research focuses on Muslim communities outside America and does not focus on young professionals as a demographic. This study is essential for bridging the gap among young Muslim professionals who do not feel motivated by secular leadership training and who are looking to find deeper meaning in their work by connecting it to their spiritual values.

Research Questions

The main research question is, “How do American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership?”

The sub–research questions are as follows:

1. How does the leadership in a Muslim student association provide motivation for leadership?
2. How do role models provide motivation for leadership?
3. How do spiritual practices such as prayer, helping others, and reading the Qur’an provide motivation for leadership?

Practical Significance

The ability to rise and stand out among one’s peers as a leader requires solving critical challenges, garnering respect, and communicating a vision (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). A well-grounded, spiritually trained leader has the potential to rise above their peers due to a deeper

spiritual motivation in the workplace to become an ambassador of one's faith and commitment to good ethics and behavior (Tuerwahong & Sulaiman, 2018).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of Muslim-specific leadership training sources for young American professionals rooted in the Muslim tradition. Many young American Muslim leaders do not have the training to lead from a Muslim perspective (Mubarak, 2007). Even if they have some spiritual knowledge, they may need to help articulate and communicate its connection to leadership practice (Mubarak, 2007). Therefore, to persuade young American Muslim leaders to seek leadership training from their faith-based perspective, this study will discuss its findings considering critical American Muslim scholars and leadership theorists and develop principles that will pave the way for young American Muslim leaders to increase their motivation and success in leadership positions. When young American leaders understand Muslim principles are combined with leadership practices, they can be motivated. Such principles and practices can be a resource for them to reach multiple levels of success in their careers and can provide companies with highly motivated leaders who will help lead their companies to success.

Theoretical significance

There is a gap in the literature regarding American Muslim millennials and workplace motivation. Past studies focus heavily on American Muslim millennials in college; by contrast, there have not been significant amounts of literature on their careers post-graduation. To date, no scholar has applied Fry's (2003) model of spiritual leadership to address the lack of motivation in the workplace particularly in specific contexts such as with Muslim leaders. Through applying Fry's (2003) model of spiritual leadership, this study will help better understand the motivation for American Muslim millennials in the workplace by analyzing what is authentic to their cultural heritage.

The theoretical framework of this thesis reviews Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory. Spiritual leadership theory invites people to find intrinsic motivation in their values, beliefs, and visions while also being inclusive of other theories of motivation in the workplace. Fry (2003) developed a model of spiritual leadership that recognizes one's spirituality as a crucial motivating factor. As a result, this study can lead to better organizational outcomes, such as motivated employees, reduced turnover, and increased productivity (Fry, 2003).

Scope

This study examines the spiritual leadership perspectives that motivate influential Muslim organizational leaders in Southern California. A total of 25 participants between the ages of 25 and 35 from across the region were interviewed.

Definitions

The terms used within this study will aim to adhere to common usage among English speakers when referring to Muslim terms. However, there are also terms critical to this study and the field of leadership that will assist in providing a leadership perspective by clarifying common notions and ideals that need to be defined.

Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Mohammed narrated in primary source texts (Esposito, 2016). This term is essential for differentiation from *Sunnah*, which is the equivalent of a direct quotation but only sometimes provides context.

Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making" (Brown et al.,

2005). This term is important because it highlights a potential category into which Muslim leadership can fit.

Leadership style: The characteristics, traits, and methods used to persuade people to follow a leader (Al Khajeh, 2018). This term is critical because the essence of this study is to understand the approaches used to achieve successful leadership.

Intrinsic Motivation: “Intrinsic motivation often arises from the individual’s positive reaction to the task, such as interest, involvement, curiosity, satisfaction, or positive challenge” (Amabile, 1993 as cited in (Tu & Lu, 2012, p. 4). This concept may easily connect to Islamic spirituality.

Innovative Work Behavior: “Individuals’ behaviors directed toward the initiation and intentional introduction of new and useful ideas, processes, products, or procedure within a work role, group or organization” (d Jong 2007, as cited in Tu & Lu, 2012, p. 3). This term indicates an important outcome of employee motivation.

Islamic Spirituality: The practice of transcending the physical or material nature of things and addressing matters of the soul and heart (Esposito, 2016). This term is important because this dissertation aims to tie leadership with Islamic spirituality for young Muslim professionals.

Muslim: A person who identifies and submits to the broadest teachings of Islam, which include worshipping one God, following the Prophet Mohammed, and believing in his teachings and the revelations known as the Qur’an (Esposito, 2016). This term was defined to ensure clarity regarding who falls into the fold of Islam.

Muslim scholar: Someone who studies Islamic theology, has attained graduate-level degrees in Islamic Studies, and serves formally as a Muslim scholar in a reputable institution.

Qur'an: The primary source for Muslim teachings. This is the book Muslims believe was revealed by God to the Prophet Mohammed, and it is considered the final revelation (Esposito, 2016).

Role Model: According to Morgenroth, T., Ryan, M. K., & Peters, K. (2015), a role model has three distinct qualities: goals and motivation, behavioral framework, and inspiration. Additionally, the study highlights that attainability is a critical aspect of role modeling. This aspect allows people to envision themselves successful like the role model. The nuances of “role models” will be provided by participants in chapter 4. And chapter 5 will discuss those nuances in light of literature.

Muslim Student association: According to Pschaida (2015), the Muslim Student Association is a popular student group for Muslim students that exist on college campuses across the United States and it serves a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The group is often a place where many young Muslims find their spirituality identity and also develop their leadership skills. They also form friendships and network with like-minded Muslims (Pschaida, 2015).

Sunnah: A secondary source of Muslim teachings that seeks to contextualize the Qur'an. It is narrated in several books, including the Sahih Bukhari. It is considered the Prophet Mohammed's contextual understanding of the Qur'an. It includes collections of sayings and stories about how the Prophet Mohammed practiced the faith (Esposito, 2016). The term is important because it includes collections of sayings and commentary related to leadership.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter is a literature review that lays the foundation of spiritual leadership and workplace motivation. The first area focuses on important literature that examines aspects of leadership within the Muslim context. The section on Muslim leadership principles discusses

how elements of motivation from leadership literature (Maxwell, 2020; Fry, 2003) connect to the Islamic faith. Chapter three discusses the methods used for this study. The findings chapter reports on themes that emerged from the interviews with millennial Muslim leaders. Finally, the discussion chapter analyzes the thematic codes in light of participant responses and provides recommendations for research regarding the role of spirituality in workplace motivation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 21st century, companies are facing new challenges with globalization and the digital age. Companies are being forced to rethink and re-evaluate their culture in response to the rise of the millennial generation (Wood, 2019). Companies need help to keep the younger generation engaged in the workforce and are looking for ways to keep them motivated at work (Wood, 2019). The millennial generation values purpose and meaning in their work, which is reflected in their workplace choices (Wood, 2019). Among this large group, an emerging demographic of American Muslims identify their faith as a factor that informs their sense of purpose. American Muslim millennials between the ages of 25 and 30 uphold a commitment to their careers, faith, and a strong belief in doing good (Pew, 2017). They are a unique group because they represent a generation that grew up facing bullying, discrimination, and threats following the aftermath of 9/11 (Bacchus, 2019). This context motivated Muslim millennials to rise against injustice (Bacchus, 2019). However, as they enter the workforce, American Muslim millennials are up against a different challenge: finding their motivation in corporate America while upholding their spirituality, values, and principles (Jolliffe & Foster, 2021). How might a company motivate and activate the investment of this group? One approach may be to understand motivation through the lens of their spiritual tradition.

The literature review below answers three questions that frame the background of this study: How are millennials (the age group of participants in this study) motivated in the workplace? Second, how does Islam (the religion of participants in this study) promote leadership principles, and third, what is known about the impact of spirituality on workplace

motivation (the topic of this study)? Literature on these three questions can sensitize the researcher to the actual research question: What are the spiritual motivations for leadership among American Muslim millennial organizational leaders?

How are Millennials Motivated in the Workplace?

A motivated employee is a catalyst for growth in any organization (Abdul Basit et al., 2018). Millennials are quick to change companies, leading to high turnover and low retention (Abdul Basit et al., 2018). Ongoing turnover in companies leads to excessive costs. Alongside the economic loss, being demotivated stifles productivity. By contrast, motivated employees increase productivity and improve company culture (Abdul Basit et al., 2018).

Millennials are the least motivated group of professionals in the workforce, and companies need help to maintain and understand their patterns of motivation (Wood, 2019). This is a significant challenge for companies because it stifles their ability to train new leaders (Wood, 2019). As baby boomers begin to retire and millennials form the largest workforce, it becomes critical to motivate workers from the new generation and recruit them for leadership opportunities (Zaharee et al., 2018). Millennials' motivations differ from those of past generations, which were driven by stability (Wood, 2019). In contrast, millennials are much more driven by purpose and the desire to make a difference (Wood, 2019).

Among the most critical factors in keeping millennial employees motivated is finding purpose in their work, diversity, and learning opportunities (Zaharee et al., 2018). Alongside that, millennials value corporate diversity and companies committed to ethical leadership and mission-driven initiatives (Zaharee et al., 2018). However, companies have only recently begun to adjust to this shift, and there are still many gaps in the diverse range of factors that motivate individual subgroups. For instance, American Muslim millennials are primarily driven and

motivated by their faith (Jolliffe & Foster, 2021). Therefore, workplaces that redefine the role of spirituality are better positioned to attract American Muslim millennial professionals (Jolliffe & Foster, 2021).

According to Hasan (2022), Fortune 500 companies have begun to establish resource groups for spirituality-based employees that lead to benefits such as the nurturing of leadership among religiously diverse employees. Some companies, such as Salesforce and American Express, have understood this and have begun to provide spaces for Muslim employees to practice their faith and increase their leadership capacity through faith-driven resources (Hasan, 2020). However, this approach is still introductory in the field. This study highlights the need for a comprehensive program that can provide leadership development programs that motivate Muslim millennial employees to learn and grow.

A critical perspective around leadership is that although an action may not be overtly religious, it is still a sign of religiosity (Yaghi, 2009). The argument is that managerial leadership, although a rudimentary and administrative task, has elements of religiosity which can be honesty, excellence, and commitment to the best work (Yaghi, 2009). This is an important observation because although a task can be seen as secular, it may fulfil a religious obligation. Although some scholars connect Quranic values with secular leadership values (Toor, 2008), little research to date shows how millennial Muslims correlate leadership values with their spiritual values.

According to Folarin (2021), millennials need specific mentoring on career-related behaviors, which may require a deeper level of engagement with mentors rather than just a superficial relationship. Additionally, three areas should be emphasized, the first is highlighting the big picture to millennials, and the second, they need to find their authentic self in the team

(Folarin, 2021). Millennials have desirable traits such as being tech-savvy, collaborative, and valuing diversity, but their talent has to be nurtured so they find themselves valuable in the larger company (Folarin, 2021). Finally, in recruiting millennials, it's imperative to highlight professional development and training programs so they have a career pathway (Folarin, 2021).

How Does Islam Promote Leadership Principles?

The sub questions in this research study ask about the impact that role models and spiritual practices have on Muslim millennial's leadership motivation. The section on Islamic leadership covers role models throughout history, and principles of leadership that correlate with Islamic values.

History of Leadership

Muslims have a rich history of leaders that range from scientists to great spiritual leaders. It's common for Muslim leaders to seek inspiration and solace from prophetic leadership teachings, including stories from the Qur'an on Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (Salleh et al., 2014). Each persona provides a foundation for Muslims to build their leadership capacity. For example, the story of Moses against Pharaoh is often quoted in situations of injustice against tyranny (Salleh et al., 2014).

However, Muslims indeed have a far more detailed account of the life of Mohammed, which spans volumes of literature dating back to 1400 years ago when he was on this planet (Salleh et al., 2014). Among the advice of Mohammed, there are insights into strategic planning, community development, and guidelines for business practices (Salleh et al., 2014). The most common imperatives for Muslim leaders are to uphold justice, build trust and hold one's self-accountable to God (Salleh et al., 2014); these are critical principles because they highlight what

values Muslims are essential aspects of Muslim leadership, although they sound simple, the complexities of these values are deepened with spiritual texts that expound on each area (Salleh et al., 2014). For example, trust considers one's emotional intelligence and feelings, which can be reflected based on spiritual teachings (Salleh et al., 2014). These insights require due diligence and academic training to translate into everyday context. There is often an openness to embrace these values in management and administrative practices (Salleh et al., 2014).

The Prophet of the Muslims, Mohammed, was known to be an ethical businessperson and earned the business community's trust as a leader due to his leadership conduct (Uyuni, 2021). However, his example as a spiritual leader in the business community needs to be noticed more. This study argues that Muslim leadership can speak to the values of the general business world. Additionally, these practices may present a relevant puzzle piece towards motivating American Muslim millennial employees. Motivated Muslim employee has the potential to advance in their careers and can also benefit their companies due to their high levels of job satisfaction that come from high motivation (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). They could also serve as exemplars of spiritual motivation for demotivated millennials.

Another important source of inspiration for Muslims is great historical leaders such as Salahuddin Ayoubi, who was known to lead Muslims against tyrannical forces and engage in intercultural dialogue (El-Awaisi, 2020). His theories of change, justice, and bringing liberation to people have often been a sought-after model for leadership (El-Awaisi, 2020). Other contemporary Muslim leaders like Abdul Kalam Azad are inspirational to Muslims (Habib, 2015). He was a key associate of Mahatma Gandhi and was an educationist who transformed the landscape of Indian education across the entire country (Habib, 2015). Azad was a bridge builder among faiths, cultures, and classes (Habib, 2015). Azad also played a critical role in reforming

Islamic thought and political ideology for the modern world (Habib, 2015). Both Abdul Kalam Azad and Salahuddin Ayoubi are among hundreds of Muslim historical figures revered among Muslim leaders and play a pivotal role as a source of inspiration, strategic decisions, and thought leadership (Habib, 2015; El-Awaisi, 2020).

Leadership and administration throughout Islamic history was a matter of serious endeavor where caliphs would intentionally train leaders and develop policy around the goals of the empire. One example of this is seen in the Ottoman Empire, where a school known as the Enderun School was established to train future leaders (Sencer et al., 2010). The Enderun school focused on recruiting young talent that was exceptional in their qualities to the extent any physical abnormalities would void their candidacy (Sencer et al., 2010). The school focused on five key areas of learning, which were the Islamic sciences, natural sciences, law and administration, art and music education, and physical training such as weaponry (Sencer et al., 2010). The establishment and maintenance of this school was essential for the Ottoman Empire to build future leaders that would oversee the empire with utmost care and professionalism (Sencer et al., 2010). The school was founded by Sultan Mehmet II, who was known to have many talents and was a great statesman. One of the most notable graduates was Matrabi, who was known to be a great mathematician but excelled in many disciplines that each had its mark of excellence such as the advancement of the Ottoman Empire's military technology (Sencer et al., 2010).

Additionally, another example is seen in the Mughal Empire that ruled over India, it was known to be a government that was efficiently run, and the leaders of the empire, such as Akbar, were strategic in writing policy and strategically building leadership in the various districts and villages (E Ishaq & Akram, 2023). The empire was known to empower local leaders while

ensuring the centralized power of governance under the empire, they began to negotiate and redefine policies and rules that would benefit the local leaders and the expansion of the empire. (E Ishaq & Akram, 2023). The leaders were not only trained in local laws but also had to learn Islamic laws and find the balance of adhering to customs and the culture of the people while also striving to uphold the aims of Islamic principles (E Ishaq & Akram, 2023).

A notable example of Islamic governance is the example of Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. Initially, he was a governor of his region in Syria and then was responsible for a project that included managing Makkah and Madina till, eventually, he became Caliphate (Handoko & Kayadibi, 2013). He was known for his reformations and commitment to accountability and was known to have a rare combination of qualities which included a solid political and religious understanding and great intelligence (Handoko & Kayadibi, 2013). He took leadership seriously and drastically reformed the caliphate under his rule, which included administrative changes that considered the strategic appointment of well-trained leaders in each region and dismissing unqualified individuals (Handoko & Kayadibi, 2013). He had seven considerations in appointing a high official, which included not appointing relatives, never giving it to anybody who wanted it, no cruel individuals, having knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah, recruiting moral people, paying governors well, and being diligent in issuing directives to governors (Handoko & Kayadibi, 2013).

Above I have given several examples from Islamic history on the seriousness of leadership and governance before God in the Muslim tradition. There are hundreds of examples that have not be studied enough around the principles of administrative leadership and how that plays a role in spiritual development as a leader. And to date, no empirical study has sought to discover how millennial leaders draw on these leaders as sources of inspiration.

Muslim Leadership Principles

According to Zu (2022), ethics is a complicated topic in business and challenging to implement; companies may rely on organizational-wide policies to set the tone regarding ethical behavior among employees but focus solely on material approaches and ignore spiritual ethics. Zu (2022) argues that the secular approach to managing one's moral behavior is insufficient, and one must adopt a spiritual philosophy. According to Maulidizen (2019), in Islamic spirituality, ethical behavior is an integral part of spiritual training, clearly outlining the ethical approaches to business. Maulidizen (2019) highlights basis is outlined in Prophetic teachings regarding situational stories of business transactions and the golden strategies. According to Maulidizen (2019), Islamic spiritual tradition emphasizes the importance of avoiding fraud and engaging in transactions with clarity on both sides. The challenge in creating a spiritual mindset is teaching a Muslim employee to navigate and practice good ethics in various scenarios.

According to Tobroni (2015), spiritual leadership in the Islamic tradition is based on the concept of Taqwa (God-consciousness), and ethical conduct is rooted in the Prophetic values and Qur'an. Additionally, a spiritual leader also has a role as a *murabbi* (spiritual teacher) who constantly practices spiritual ideals and is a walking example of what it means to embody these spiritual traits (Tobroni, 2015). The values of a spiritual leader also differ, perhaps the average person may be drawn to draw a salary from every action, but one that's tied closely with doing good deeds will often go out of their way to do more because they recognize the reward from God (Tobroni, 2015). Finally, an important trait of a spiritual leader is that aren't focused on dogma, rather there is an emphasis on the esoteric nature of one's leadership which places importance on genuine action (Tobroni, 2015).

According to Salamun & Rahman (2021) three aspects of the Prophet Mohammed's leadership that are critical to understanding as a model. The three areas are visionary leadership,

the impact of leadership, and the core principles around leadership. Additionally, the caveat is that these areas should be observed from the lens of characteristics and behaviors (Salamun & Rahman, 2021). A critical area that's emphasized is the relationship between a leader and the follower and obeying God's commands in dealing with them (Salamun & Rahman, 2021). Finally, the core principles of effective leadership focus on leadership as a trust to God rather than a privilege, empowering people around oneself, team-bonding, knowledge management and culture change, and finally the management of resources (Salamun & Rahman, 2021). Each area can be studied independently in depth considering the Islamic worldview.

According to Toor (2008), the Islamic vision of leadership differs from popular theories on leadership because, at the core of Islamic leadership, there is an emphasis that one is selfless and answerable to God on all occasions. He argues that Islam aspires to reach moral and ethical heights in leadership. He highlights the problematic nature of new forms of workplace spirituality that seek to separate religion from spirituality. He argues that Islam does not seek to separate religion from work and that when one is working, they are indeed in service to religion (Toor, 2008).

According to Zaim et al. (2021), ethical leadership – particularly the field of Muslim ethics – connects to organizational success. Muslim leadership principles share commonalities with broader ethical leadership frameworks and provide young Muslim leaders with a history of foundational leadership practices. Understanding this history can improve organizational effectiveness and team performance (Zaim et al., 2021). Muslim ethical principles can lead to excellent organizational outcomes when practiced in organizations. Zaim et al. (2021) highlights Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali, the greatest reformer of Islamic scholarship in the fifth century, who proposed a model of Muslim ethics that focused on four virtues: justice, wisdom, courage, and

temperance. The sections below describe these four, and then move on to incorporate a number of other principles related to Islamic spirituality, such as competence, focus, initiative, and so on. Many of the values below correlate Maxwell (2007) principles for leadership to Islamic values.

Justice

When it comes to principles within Islam that promote leadership, one theme that immediately comes to mind is justice. “Justice is the general virtue that individuals follow to stay balanced in life by removing injustice and inequity” (Zaim et al., 2021, p. 2). Justice begins by changing oneself and then becoming closest to oneself. This concept of “being close to oneself” refers to challenging social injustices by beginning with personal reform as the starting point. The concept of justice focusing on increasing the quality of leadership for Muslims by placing emphasis on rectifying one’s behavior to become just individuals.

Wisdom

Wisdom connects to the ability to negotiate between extreme positions, to the control of one’s emotions, and to the courage necessary for battling with one’s ego (Zaim et al., 2021). According to Fry (2003), managing these destructive emotions contributes to building a better workplace culture, increasing productivity, and enhancing organizational commitment. These ethical practices align with a recognizable need in companies to regulate individual interests for the greater common good. Although the principles may initially appear spiritual and religiously motivated, they offer practical applications that lead to specific and tangible outcomes within the workplace.

Wisdom is related to discernment. According to Maxwell (2007), discernment is the ability to analyze past successes and understand how to do better in the future, ultimately leading

to addressing the root cause of issues. In the Muslim tradition, the concept of discernment is essential in leadership for reflecting and refining one's strategy, and it correlates on multiple levels (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020). The first step in discernment is to constantly rectify one's relationship with God, which begins with checking the state of one's heart (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020). The heart is a moral compass, because all roads in the sensory world lead back to the heart from one's eyes, ears, and tongue. If one practices sound behavior, one's perception of the world will be pure (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020). The Prophet Mohammed spoke about doing the right thing, and his first response to a particular questioner was to consult his heart's inclination (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020). The heart argues for a balance between the head, compassion, and the hand, which brings together the critical qualities of sense knowledge, head knowledge, and hand knowledge, which lead to the manifestation of one's spirit (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020). The point here is that spiritual leadership requires one to operate on multiple levels; not every decision can be made with pure intellect or heart. Combining these different aspects of oneself leads to better leadership (Tarip & bin Abu Bakar, 2020).

Courage

According to Faris & Abdalla (2018), in the Islamic tradition, courage is ethical when there is pressure to do the opposite of the courageous thing. Faris & Abdalla (2018) argue that an ethical climate correlates to moral courage and challenges unfair practices. They describe moral courage as closely tied to authenticity because it takes courage to communicate it. According to Shahjahan (1985), the Muslim scholar Al-Farabi described courage as a quality of the mind to overcome fear. However, Al-Farabi differentiates between courage and rashness, which is why he makes a case for reason and intellect as a criterion for preventing irrational and possibly

regressive behaviors (Shahjahan, 1985). Shahjahan (1985) argues that there is a unique point at which the ability to be courageous will make one happy because one's life is based on truth. Happiness and the ability to come to work feeling energized are critical because a person brings their best work to the company when there is this sense of fulfillment (Fry, 2003).

Temperance

Temperance has to do with self-discipline. Islam emphasizes self-discipline through spiritual practices and knowledge (Raquib et al., 2020). The Prophet Mohammed was known to promote self-discipline in controlling one's desires—which include speech, sexual appetite, alcohol, and other vices—by placing limits on what is acceptable and what is not (Raquib et al., 2020). A lack of self-discipline can be a significant impediment to leadership and can disqualify one from a leadership role (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022). The example of Abu Dharr, a companion of the Prophet Mohammed, is an example of a man who sought to be in a leadership position (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022), but the Prophet Mohammed stated that he was weak and could not handle leadership (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022). This is an essential point because, although he was motivated and inspired to seek a leadership position, he was denied that role because he lacked discipline. There is a critical gap in the literature on the connection between the influence of leadership qualities from a spiritual perspective and the everyday leadership of Muslim millennials in the workplace.

Purpose and Vision

Purpose is an often-compelling topic. According to Dik et al. (2015), finding purpose in one's career leads to meaningful behavior and better career planning. Dik et al. (2015) highlight that feelings about a career are tied to one's life goals and intentional response to a calling. Dik

et al. (2015) highlight that people struggle with working jobs they deem meaningless and lack passion for the roles because there is no purpose.

According to Esposito (2016), Islamic spirituality identifies purpose by reminding Muslims that one's entire life is a journey back to God, which leads to heaven, so one's daily activities must align with a greater spiritual purpose. The greater goal is the starting point because every other activity can be tied back to this purpose. One can pursue any career and understand that it has a more profound service to God if there is an intention. According to Esposito (2016), intention is a critical aspect of Islamic spirituality and can be the basis of good action. In the case of purpose, we identify that one can have a greater sense and then seek any career path and fulfill a spiritual goal if one makes the intention, but Esposito (2016) describes that without an intention, any action could be void of spiritual achievement.

According to Adawiyah & Pramuka (2017), Muslims that feel that engagement with their religion is an advantage for the company because it allows them to bring meaning into their work. Adawiyah & Pramuka (2017) highlight that job satisfaction and organizational performance increase when Muslim employees are spiritually engaged in their faith practices. According to Adawiyah & Pramuka (2017) 84.4% of Muslim employees felt that their faith practice helped them with their work and attitudes related to the job. The challenge in applying this is discerning the company's role in supporting their Muslim employees to practice their faith in a way that benefits the company. This is an opportunity to provide resources related to a Muslim-centric leadership framework relevant to an employee. Adawiyah & Pramuka (2017) highlights that reliance on God, consciousness, gratitude, and being content with God's decree were all positive traits that allowed Muslim employees to feel better about their work.

To understand vision, one can begin with the life of the Prophet Mohammed, who, through his narrations and teachings, constantly motivated people to aspire to more extraordinary business practices and ethics, including positive messages of hope (Davis & Winn, 2017). Moreover, the vision of success of Muslims was a spiritual and material vision that inspired people to invent, create, and build institutions worldwide, from the Middle East to China (Davis & Winn, 2017). For example, the first university in Morocco, known as the Qarrawayin, was established out of a spiritual vision for education (Hoque & Abdullah, 2021).

According to Maxwell (2007), having a vision is an indispensable quality in a leader; it brings people together, and a clear picture will keep people moving forward. According to Maxwell, one must know one's history to begin to build a future. In Muslim history, having a clear vision for a just workplace is critical to leadership success and is embedded in Muslim leadership principles (Davis & Winn, 2017). The Muslim community is full of visionary leaders. Nonetheless, their legacy is rarely explained within leadership and work (Davis & Winn, 2017).

How does one begin to formulate and communicate a vision? Muslim visionaries across history have demonstrated advanced thinking that has produced legacies of knowledge, inclusion, and innovation. According to Maxwell (2007), a vision connects personal experiences and history. Muslim professionals can benefit from leadership programs that emphasize leadership training that utilizes these historical visionary models. For instance, training programs may feature leaders who offer timely and culturally responsive inspirations for coalition building or female empowerment. Nana Asmau was a female visionary who led a movement to increase access to women's education across the African region (Mack, 2021).

According to Kabi (2021), another critically important visionary leader was Abul Kalam Azad, a scholar and educationist in India who led the resistance against British colonialism

alongside Gandhi. Azad envisioned making education accessible to his entire country (Kabi, 2021). He led a nationwide campaign and was appointed to the highest office in education. He ensured that he passed legislation making education accessible for future generations (Kabi, 2021). One can note that, although committed to his spiritual leadership principles, Azad was still able to share a vision of free access to education that resonated with people of different faith backgrounds across India (Kabi, 2021). Both examples highlight how spirituality translates into a vision that inspires organizational change. In that sense, these Muslim figures capture the potential of using spirituality to motivate change. According to Fry (2003), the ability to articulate a vision leads to positive organizational outcomes because the desire to achieve the vision motivates employees.

Character

According to Maxwell (2007), the most important quality in a leader is character. Maxwell (2007) argues that character requires integrity in all situations, and people will quickly lose trust in a leader due to character flaws. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed came to teach the quality of noble character (Syam, 2017). These prophetic principles have been the gold standard among Muslims for centuries (Beekun, 2012). Historians argue that as Muslims emerged from the Arabian Peninsula and reached different lands, their character stood out because they had a highly ethical business framework (Syam, 2017). According to Fry (2003), character and values in the context of spiritual leadership require leaders to understand their behaviors and attitudes at their core.

Many Muslim groups, such as the Sufis, which included a historical alliance of workers' guilds, sought to make personal development and character-building the focal point of their spirituality (Afshari, 2020). Their work focused on building better character habits, from being

mindful with time, to refining servant leadership (Ally, 2019). Alongside that, volumes of literature around the Prophet Mohammed's noble character, including works such as *Shamail Al Muhammadiyya* (Characteristics of Muhammad) sought to provide insight into the daily habits, routine, and work-life of the Prophet Mohammed (Khudoyberdiyevich & Rakhmonqulovich, 2020). The Muslim character refinement process is about building better leadership skills and entering into a more profound spiritual journey with God (Ahmed, 2020). Muslims try to actively develop innate mindfulness that God sees every action and behavior they take, which can lead to being more watchful of their actions (Khudoyberdiyevich & Rakhmonqulovich, 2020). This innate mindful behavior can lead to increased care and concern, beginning with one's own emotions and extending to mindfulness of colleagues and the broader goals of the business (Fry, 2003).

Charisma

According to Maxwell (2007), another critical area of importance is charisma, which emphasizes paying attention to others and avoiding becoming self-absorbed. This quality of paying attention to others is evident in the life of the Prophet Mohammed, as it is recorded in the prophetic teachings that he used to consult people and take their opinion on secular matters (Ally, 2019). One can understand from this that being charismatic means being humble and not seeing oneself as the source of all the answers. The Prophet's approach to leadership was to serve the people (Ally, 2019); he argued that the leader of the people is their servant (Ally, 2019). This principle reminds leaders to put the needs of the people first, which requires letting go of one's ego. Within the workplace, this focus on others could increase motivation by building a sense of importance and significance for each individual.

Competence

According to Maxwell (2007), competence correlates to a leader's planning ability, it necessitates constant improvement and commitment to excellence, and it requires that outcomes exceed expectations (Aydin, 2020). From a Muslim perspective, there is a spiritual concept called *Ihsan* that is part of Muslim self-development. *Ihsan* is about constantly improving and doing things with excellence (Aydin, 2020). It is a love of God and a commitment to fulfilling one's work by tying it to God's pleasure (Aydin, 2020). While another employee may just try to "get by" and not take on any extra tasks, one committed to *Ihsan* will strive to do more than asked. This value motivates workers to contribute and produce the best possible outcomes (Aydin, 2020).

Focus

Being able to focus is a challenge in the distracting age of social media (Carstens et al., 2018). Attention spans have drastically shortened, and there is a constant push to gain people's attention through creative approaches (Carstens et al., 2018). The Prophet Mohammed was known to meditate to gain focus and escape society's challenges (Suzanne & Newcombe, 2020). Before becoming a prophet, he went into mountains and caves, where he reflected and stepped away from societal issues (Suzanne & Newcombe, 2020). After becoming a prophet, he went on a mission that lasted longer than 21 years and focused on teaching his faith principles and calling people toward good (Hopkinson, 2020). Throughout that time, he kept his attention on what truly mattered. The first 10 years of his mission were challenging (Hopkinson, 2020). He faced economic boycotts, family losses, and threats to his life, and he had to gain followers (Hopkinson, 2020).

However, as things progressed and his message spread, his strength grew, and his focus was still clear despite all the challenges (Hopkinson, 2020). The principle one can derive from this context is the ability to persevere, which is a critical quality in spiritual leadership. In perseverance, there is an emphasis on doing what it takes and stretching one's abilities (Fry, 2003).

Generosity

Generosity is a critical leadership quality because it promotes knowledge sharing, fosters a collaborative culture, and increases employee performance (Javaid et al., 2018). Knowledge sharing is promoted by Muslim scholars and is a positive indicator of the Islamic work ethic (Javaid et al., 2018). According to Egel & Fry (2016), Muslims integrated existing cultural values, such as generosity, with Bedouin culture, but they broadened the depth of such generosity by making it about being inclusive and increasing justice rather than being generous to one's own people. This is an essential point because Bedouin culture serves as the basis of spiritual leadership from the Islamic perspective; the goal of this model of Muslim leadership was to make it accessible to any individual and to build and share culture in any setting, but particularly within organizations (Egel & Fry, 2016).

Initiative

The quality of taking the initiative is a critical component of Islamic leadership; Islam compels people to take responsibility for forming a community when there is nobody to take charge (Murphy & Smolarski, 2018). Muslim scholars differentiate between communal and personal obligations (Murphy & Smolarski, 2018). When there is nobody to fulfill community obligations, it becomes one's responsibility to take the initiative (Murphy & Smolarski, 2018).

An example of this is the story of Nana Asmau, a female scholar in Nigeria. She led an initiative across the entire Sokoto stage in which she built schools and networks for women's education (Mack, 2021). This initiative is relevant to the workplace because it provides a historical reference to a difficult moment when a Muslim woman took the initiative to educate women. This may provide a potential American Muslim millennial employee with the inspiration to take the initiative in their work, outside of their duties.

Listening

In Muslim leadership, the ability to listen is critical to success because one can make very wrong decisions when one does not listen to the challenge at hand (Usman et al., 2019). The ability to listen preserves trust in organizations (Fry, 2003) and ensures that one serves other people over one's own self-interest. Alongside that, the Islamic tradition is an oral tradition. The Qur'an was a book that was revealed, recited, and memorized before it was eventually written (Usman et al., 2019). In everyday leadership dealings, there is great emphasis on giving the benefit of the doubt and verifying facts before assuming what was communicated (Usman et al., 2019). This approach helps clarify miscommunication and prevent issues between people (Usman et al., 2019). It is also essential not to gossip, denigrate others, or spread information that would harm relationships (Usman et al., 2019).

Positive Attitude

Another key trait of the Prophet Mohammed was being optimistic in leadership to serve as a role model to followers (Beekun, 2012). According to Maxwell (2007), a positive mindset requires self-awareness. If a leader constantly expressed negativity and had a defeatist attitude, people would only follow them if there was a vision to build (Maxwell, 2007). By contrast,

believing that change is possible keeps people motivated (Maxwell, 2007); the Prophet Mohammed was known to teach that, in the end, everything that happens to a Muslim is positive because only God truly knows the outcome of a given action in this life or the next; he will always be just in his dealings, whether in this life or after one dies (Shahjahan, 1985). This view of the afterlife is critical because it creates a level of accountability; even if one commits a crime and is able to avoid criminal charges, that is not the ultimate metric by which he will be judged.

Problem-solving

According to Maxwell (2007), problem-solving requires anticipating problems and being emotionally aware of how to deal with them without being overwhelmed. In the end, what matters is the big picture, which is critical when trying to solve problems (Maxwell, 2007); the Prophet Mohammed was a known problem solver in crisis situations (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022). He strategically used his companions based on their talent (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022), and he utilized the right people's skills to solve issues (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022). For example, he appointed the right leaders to resolve foreign relations disputes and serve as ambassadors to build better relationships (Aziz, 2020). The Prophet Mohammed's approach to leadership focused on constantly nurturing talent, and he was careful to ensure there was a growth trajectory by ensuring the right talent was in the correct positions (Aziz, 2020).

Relationships

The Prophet Mohammed emphasized the importance of building relationships and indicated that every individual that one meets has rights that must be recognized (Ezziti et al., 2020). This is a critical starting point because it sets the tone for the spiritual value of workplace relationships. Relationships are a critical part of building communities, and maintaining

relationships requires recognizing personal responsibility, which includes not gossiping, denigrating others, or attacking people's honor (Hopkinson, 2020). If an established code of conduct exists, one must follow it and maintain relationships (Ezziti et al., 2020). Relationships also require compromise; this is highlighted in a treaty that the Prophet Mohammed initiated called the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, in which he forwent the rights to the title of prophethood because he understood that negotiating with other parties requires compromise and an understanding of the positive outcomes of relationship building (Jaffar et al., 2022).

The Prophet Mohammed compelled people to keep working on their relationships because perhaps, at some point, the other person might soften up and open their heart to the relationship (Hopkinson, 2020). An example of a modern-day application of relationship building for commercial benefit is the establishment of the Muslim commercial network, in which relationships with Muslim merchants were built to increase prosperity in Chinese society, by the Chinese Hui Muslims (Wang, 2018). The newfound economic power of the Chinese Hui Muslim leaders led to the building of social programs and the establishment of financial control for their community (Wang, 2018). This is a critical lesson in relationship building because spiritual leadership's core value is building relationships (Fry, 2003).

Responsibility

Islam promotes the importance of responsibility in business dealings (Alshehhi & Hamdan, 2022). One is responsible for dealing justly and understanding an action's consequences before taking it (Raquib et al., 2020). While people may engage in a particular business dealing without clarifying responsibilities, Islamic leadership principles advocate for transparent business relationships that ensure transparency and fairness (Rokan, 2020).

According to Rokan (2020), leaders are in charge of people in order to ensure fair practices,

regulate injustice, and attend to equality. Each leader is accountable for their areas of responsibility and must take them seriously, particularly in the marketplace (Rokan, 2020). This is an essential point because responsibility and leadership must be addressed, and every action has implications.

Mentorship

According to Hudson (2013), mentorship is a powerful method of training the next generation of leaders within a company, and it's an incredible career advancement opportunity for both mentors and mentees. According to Possumah et al. (2012), mentorship has been a core element of the tradition since its inception in Islamic spirituality. Possum et al. (2012) highlight that The Prophet Mohammed was known to teach through demonstrative practice, where people saw that he was leading by example, and people can take that back and emulate.

Possum et al. (2012) highlight the idea that mentorship plays a role in Islamic literature, particularly in workforce development, as the early Muslims were known to build mentorship models between poor and wealthy communities to transfer skills and knowledge as a form of job training. A potential Islamic leadership framework can also be to implement mentorship programs that serve low socioeconomic status communities.

Striving for Excellence

According to Possumah et al. (2012), a common challenge in companies is motivating employees to do their best work. Possum et al. (2012) highlight that employees may be underpaid and understaffed, and the company may lack a positive culture reinforcing better management. According to Possumah et al. (2012), however, in the Islamic spiritual tradition, there is a concept called *ihsan*, which makes a case for striving for excellence as a form of

connection with God. Possum et al. (2012) argue that for Muslims, striving for excellence is less about meeting the company's challenges, and is more about personal integrity and reaching a spiritual station through fulfilling one's responsibilities with high professionalism and perfection.

Personal integrity can become a powerful force to drive Muslims to become leaders by adopting behaviors that lead to company excellence. This could look like executing a significant campaign for the company, and a Muslim leader feel compelled to be an example for his faith or a more personal journey with God.

Communicating like the Prophet

According to van Zoonen (2022), in a world that has become increasingly virtual, communication is essential to cultivate productive environments. Van Zoonen (2022) highlights that communication has become problematic in virtual environments since the Covid 19 pandemic, and the lack of clarity can lead to miscommunication. Hatbah (2020) explains that the Prophet Mohammed's approach to communication was simple but powerful: He gave his entire presence and attention to any individual who spoke to him, recognizing that the person should be heard and validated. Validation in a workplace is critical because it prevents conflicts and increases employee engagement. Hatbah (2020) argues that the Prophetic method of communication emphasizes holding one's tongue accountable in front of God and that gossip, foul language, and harshness are not traits of a believer. Instead, it indicates neglect of one's spirituality.

Investing in Oneself

Tucker (2011) argues that investing in oneself is a critical decision that boosts one's long-term career abilities. Tucker (2011) highlights self-confidence, self-awareness, and happiness among the key traits one receives from investing in one's education regarding career strategy. Khan (2019) highlights that Muslims are called to invest in themselves by becoming the best version of themselves through perfecting their leadership qualities and constantly seeking excellence. He argues that it all begins with emulating the Islamic Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah. The latter had a successful career as a merchant and understood how to embody the traits needed for a life that focuses on the spiritual and functions practically in their daily job. Khan (2019) describes Islamic spirituality as a self-sufficient mindset that seeks ways to make money and not rely on others. The gap in research is the need for more connection between Prophetic habits and their applicability to career success.

Conflict Management

According to Naz (2018), the Prophet Mohammed's leadership promoted negotiation and dialogue to resolve conflicts. Additionally, the Qur'an teaches how to navigate conflict and make difficult decisions (Naz, 2018). Additionally, it is mentioned that the Prophet Mohammed was known to resolve conflicts before taking on the formal role of a Prophet, there was a situation called Hilful Fudul where conflicting tribes were at odds with one another, and as a pact to bring people together and work towards common goals Hilful Fudul was established (Naz, 2018). A secondary situation was when tribes were at odds regarding who would have the honor of leading a ritual to place the black stone onto the Kabbah in Makkah, the people could not agree, and they appointed the Prophet Mohammed as the mediator, and he brought them together and hold the stone together and places it onto the wall (Naz, 2018). These are a few incidents in

which the Prophet Mohammed served as a mediator before becoming a Prophet as he continued his mission; there were several incidents in which he led a peaceful resolution and preferred every peaceful outcome before going to war (Naz, 2018). Finally, a significant peaceful treaty established by the Prophet Mohammed was the Charter of Medina which he created peace with the Jews and ensured they would be able to practice faith, lend a helping hand to them while ensuring Medina is a holy city to both (Naz, 2018).

According to Randeree & Faramawy (2010), project managers can resolve conflicts from an Islamic perspective utilizing the SNT and SALAM model based on the practices of the Prophet Mohammed. The S.N.T model, which stands for Shura (Consultation), Naseeha (Advice), and Ta'awun (Cooperation), this approach focuses on minimizing disagreement and focused on working through conflicts constructively toward change (Randeree & Faramawy 2010). The second model is the SALAM model, which stands for Stating the Conflict, Agreeing Conflict Exists, Listening and Learning from Differences, Advising One Another, and minimizing destructive conflict sources. Additionally, it's important to note the models are not meant to maintain the status quo but to foster change constructively (Randeree & Faramawy 2010).

Embracing Diversity

According to Muhtada (2012), the Islamic perspective on diversity management has existed for centuries but has not gotten the attention it should deserve in recent years as conversations on diversity are on the rise. It's highlighted that the Qur'an advocates for knowing people of various backgrounds and for teaching people how to work collaboratively. Additionally, gender equity, religious pluralism, and discrimination are discussed within the Qur'an, and fairness was emphasized by the Prophet Mohammed (Muhtada, 2012). Alongside

that, there have been numerous instances throughout Islamic history where this was highlighted. One incident was during the second Caliph Umar ibn Al Khattab's reign he appointed Shifa bint Abdullah to regulate the marketplace. The Ottoman dynasty also ensured people of other faiths were in significant positions of leadership, such as Yakub Mahallesi, who was the prime minister, and dozens of instances where Muslim queens were the primary rulers (Muhtada, 2012). Finally, in a practical sense, leaders should identify and develop policies and procedures that incorporate diversity while also understanding the language that Muslim employees can embrace based on their context (Muhtada, 2012).

Summary of Islamic leadership principles

In summation, Islamic leadership principles direct every action small or big back to God, and this is the foundation of one's ethical framework. The primary reason one is mindful of their actions is because it either will draw one closer or further from God. The example of leadership is seen in the life of the Prophet Mohammed which consists of examples of leadership in action from communication to conflict resolution all the way to self-development. Caliphs throughout history have tried to contextualize the Prophetic example of leadership in the empires they have ruled but all have been human attempts at adapting to the challenges of the time.

What Is Known About the Impact of Spirituality on Workplace Motivation?

Literature on faith in the workplace has taken a few directions. The role of faith is not discussed extensively in the context of motivation—especially in relation to millennial Muslim leaders.. However, some studies have looked at the role of student associations and mentorship in developing leaders. Additionally, some research focuses on spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, workplace chaplains, the impact of spirituality on ethical decision making, and the

difference between spirituality and religion. These topics form a background for understanding the impact of spirituality on workplace motivation. Each is discussed below.

Student associations and their effects on young Muslim leadership development

According to Pschaida (2015), the Muslim student association is where many young Muslims build their leadership skills, including self-awareness and confidence, which are gained through trying and testing out different roles. Additionally, Pschaida's research indicates that people also sought long-term leadership roles after tasting what leadership looks like. Pschaida (2015) highlights that these young Muslim leaders also learn to navigate challenging social and cultural dynamics when serving Muslim students who come from different ethnic backgrounds. They learn to work amidst diverse viewpoints as they encounter Muslim students who hold opinions that challenge the dominant perspective on the Islamic tradition. Additionally, these young leaders learn to navigate navigating political challenges; and they get involved in political activism on campus as they challenge positions related to foreign policy and various issues that are impacting the world globally and locally (Pschaida, 2015).

Mentorship and young Muslim leadership development

According to Pschaida (2015), the Muslim student association has organizational advisors that provide guidance on everyday challenges. These advisors mentor young Muslim leaders on campus. Pschaida (2015) highlights the types of advice they provide is variegated. For example, one advisor was noted to have provided a strategic position on navigating the event requests of a Muslim sect on campus; and another advisor provided direction on how to work across the various sects within Islam. Additionally, there are mentors on campus who could be older students, working professionals, and faculty members who interact with students. These mentors are available to engage with budding leaders and provide counsel (Pschaida, 2015).

Leaders of the Muslim Student Association build friendships with new students and identify the potential of younger students who could take the mantle, serve on a board position, or get involved (Pschaida, 2015). Additionally, they begin to build relationships with these students through campus activities and gatherings where they build a natural friendship and sometimes, they even share apartments (Pschaida, 2015). One can note that the mentorship model with the Muslim student association is organic and there is not a formal system that dictates how mentoring takes place but ultimately there is a strong culture within the student group that contributes to an atmosphere that promotes mentorship.

Spiritual Leadership

The framework of this study resonates with Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory. Spiritual leadership theory invites people to find intrinsic motivation in their values, beliefs, and visions while also being inclusive of other motivational theories in the workplace. Fry (2003) developed a model of spiritual leadership that recognized one's spirituality as a crucial motivating factor that can lead to better organizational outcomes, such as employee motivation, reduced turnover, and increased productivity (Fry, 2003).

A crucial aspect of spiritual leadership is tapping into one's spiritual journey so one can lead authentically (Fry, 2003), while a focus on spirituality allows for sharing traditions and leading diverse audiences (Fry, 2003). According to Hunsaker (2022), the ability to tap into workplace spirituality leads to innovative work behavior. Hunsaker (2022) argues that if employees feel their values are mutually aligned with the organization, this leads to enhanced workplace satisfaction. Workplace spirituality can potentially be an untapped well that can transform workplaces by approaching motivation from a different angle that is not talked about enough.

Workplace Spirituality

According to Shreshta (2017), workplace spirituality has a positive influence on job satisfaction and job involvement. It is highlighted that managers can practically implement workplace spirituality in a role that captivates an employee's spirituality (Shreshta, 2017). Although, in theory, this sounds like a great idea, one must also consider the manager's limited resources and knowledge base to begin to implement spirituality in a role for a specific employee. Perhaps, this makes sense when traditions are few; but in an increasingly diverse workspace, this would require outside experts and guidance.

Additionally, four core areas contribute to this increase in job satisfaction and job involvement which are compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence. Perhaps this approach to workplace spirituality is highlighted and focused on secular values that are broad enough to resonate with people across faith traditions, but the deeper an organization goes to understand spirituality within the context of major faith traditions can increase one's connection to the values. According to Naidoo (2014), workplace spirituality can allow employees to act from a frame of reference that is authentic to them. The author highlights that the shift toward spirituality is the most significant trend since the 1950s in management (Naidoo, 2014). Additionally, the idea of workplace spirituality must also consider the religious backgrounds of all people to be inclusive and must consider the practices and beliefs of each individual religion (Naidoo, 2014).

According to NandanPrabhu et al. (2016), workplace spirituality is evolving and has begun to incorporate multiple components, such as spiritual leadership alongside individual and organizational spirituality. However, the case is made that religion is distinct from spirituality (NandanPrabhu et al., 2016). I would argue that this is a broad generalization of one's faith people practice spirituality differently, and some may find it antithetical to their faith to try and

remove religious practices from their spirituality. Additionally, a challenge is operationalizing workplace spirituality, but researchers are trying to incorporate empirical research by observing key elements like inner life, meaningful life, connectedness, and transcendence (NandanPrabhu et al., 2016). Again, these are broad definitions that perhaps align with some forms of spirituality but still limit the scope of spirituality.

According to Miller et al. (2018), faith in the workplace allows businesses to view ethics from a different lens that can potentially align with people's beliefs. This is an important area of research that is not reviewed enough and is fascinating because people committed to faith have certain values and ethical guidelines they adhere to. Perhaps, one approach to navigating the challenge of ethics within a company is to present it to employees in language that is specific to one's faith context and potentially build deeper meaning behind each individual ethical practice. Finally, another key area of importance is the role of diversity in the workplace. Faith can have the potential of enhancing tolerance particularly by enhancing one's own religious identity in the context of workplace expectations (Miller et al, 2018). Ultimately this highlights a few approaches to faith in the workplace. The article is biased towards certain faith traditions, I believe Islam has different values and practices that perhaps differ from the existing structures that were put together in this literature.

Workplace Chaplains

Additionally, the field of workplace chaplaincy is an opportunity to provide spiritual support to employees in areas of a personal nature (Miller et al, 2018). However, I would argue that these workplace chaplains can expand their role to motivate employees by tying their practices to spirituality. According to Waller (2012), there are challenges that employees face on a daily basis that require spirituality to solve, and that is the best approach. This is a profound

perspective because it highlights the importance of spirituality in one's life. Some employees don't relate to secular solutions and require spiritual insight into how to navigate a problem. Perhaps, an employee is struggling with productivity at work after a loved one recently passed away, and they need spiritual guidance to navigate this tragic time. Additionally, it's highlighted that chaplains at work can potentially fill that role and be there during stressful times and help them navigate personal and family issues (Waller, 2012).

Although I find the benefit in having a chaplain provide this form of spiritual care, I think it's only addressing one aspect of the employee's spiritual life as it relates to their personal challenges. A more nuanced approach would be to consider how this workplace chaplain can enhance their workplace motivation and productivity while incorporating spirituality. However, the research highlights the unexpected benefits of these workplace chaplains that contribute to a company's bottom line (Waller, 2012).

How Spirituality leads to Ethical Decisions

According to Kauser (2021), religiosity impacts one's ethical judgments, and placing too much emphasis on hope can create challenges. The research analyzes Saudi executives' ethical judgments based on their perspective on hope and fear, and ultimately, they find that too much hope can impair one's ethical judgment. This is an interesting perspective because it highlights research that delves into the practicality of spirituality in the workplace. The research proposes an integrative-spiritual-based model that would serve as a framework for ethical decisions. It incorporates a balanced approach between fear and hope in making decisions that consider God's punishment for unethical judgments and God's reward for ethical judgments as a critical approach (Kauser, 2021). The researchers argue that knowledge can mitigate the false reliance on hope, and a level of fear can be healthy to be intentional and thoughtful around one's decision

(Kausser, 2021). This approach is a model that could be seen as relevant to Muslim employees, but the challenge is that many leadership decisions require choosing between two positive values.

Spirituality vs Religion

According to Van Niekerk (2018), theorists predicted that religion would be replaced by rationality as time evolved. He highlights that spirituality has emerged as a broad approach that independently engages with religious values without engaging the religious identity. Van Niekerk (2018) highlights that this new approach to spirituality in the modern age has caused uneasiness among religious people spirituality lacks accountability and perhaps does not authentically represent their religions.

Additionally, Van Niekerk (2018) argues that people who often fit in these buckets also strive for a community to belong to, but because of the lack of structure within spirituality, it is hard to connect with any organized belief system. Finally, Van Niekerk (2018) highlights that around a hundred years ago, a prediction that spirituality would replace religion was made, but this prediction has fallen short, and religion is still a dominant force. He argues that spirituality used to refer to a perspective on a relationship with God, and that has shifted to a blank perspective on human life.

According to Fry (2003), spirituality in the workplace is distinct from religion because spirituality focuses on shared values and does not engage with dogma. Fry (2003) fundamentally replaces God with a higher power and trims the religious terms, ultimately toning down any semblance of religious philosophy. However, Toor (2008) argues that Islamic leadership does not agree with that point because Muslims cannot separate themselves from their religion, and one's engagement in work is a religious act. This creates a challenge for theorists focused on

bridging the gap between workplace spirituality and religious people. The approach to secular spirituality lacks contextual application, and the generalized approach creates distinction versus promoting leadership that is most authentic to one's values and beliefs.

In the case of Islamic leadership, the Prophet Mohammed is seen as the authority on leadership, and his habits, practices, style, and approach take precedence. Because the Prophet Mohammed holds such a high value, companies should approach leadership for their Muslim employees from a perspective they understand (Toor, 2008). Past challenges with religion in the workplace include navigating religious debate and accommodating several opinions. Toor (2008) highlights that the Muslim identity isn't the goal of the Muslim the goal is to practice everyday spirituality, which includes refining one's character and seeking God's help.

According to Aljunied (2019), Syed Naquib Al-Attas is one of the foremost experts and scholars on Islam and Secularism. He highlights that Al-Attas's view is that secular ideas lead to spiritual regression and have caused them to forget God's wisdom. Additionally, Aljunied (2019) quotes Al-Attas:

Our great and God-fearing predecessors of astute vision and profound intellectual and spiritual depth have labored in terms of centuries to build splendid systems of thought and action with God's help and guidance, and if we are even to hope to rise to the same expectation, then we must humbly emulate their example.

In summation, Al-Attas is challenging thinkers, intellectuals, and leaders with a religious background to push back against secularism and reinforce God's wisdom in every aspect of life, the world may draw people towards materialism, but the goal should be to resist and rise (Aljunied, 2019). At the core of this message is to practice Islam genuinely and philosophically and not get drawn into secular replacements which seek to remove God from the picture.

Rethinking Spirituality

A significant challenge with workplace spirituality is the ability to tie empirical and research studies to spirituality. According to Nicolae (2013):

One of the most challenging aspects of this evolution is related to the difficulties of studying spirituality scientifically. This translates in the need to rethink orthodox research approaches in managerial and organizational science, having vast implications for redefining acceptable and valid research methods and instruments.

The researcher highlights that new approaches to measure spirituality must be constructed in order to produce results that matter (Nicolae, 2013). Additionally, the researcher suggests looking at non positivist methods such as qualitative research to understand the phenomenon. According to Thakur & Singh (2016), spirituality cannot be limited to providing benefits and services to employees but must expand its impact to consider the personal aspects of spirituality. This is an important point because people have unique connections to spirituality that moves beyond meditation. They also openly discuss spirituality, recreational events, and, ultimately, employee happiness as a priority because it maximizes productivity (Thakur & Singh, 2016). Additionally, a critical area is how companies improve business processes and procedures by incorporating spirituality. Ultimately, this is perhaps one of the most critical areas for a company because it focuses on the bottom line, and it aligns spirituality with the company's objectives. According to Sapta (2021), workplace spirituality is an antidote to human resource challenges in companies, such as employee well-being, engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. Additionally, workplace spirituality impacts an employee's self-esteem, motivation, and performance (Sapta, 2021). Alongside that, it can potentially ensure loyalty to the company and commitment, and the research suggests that seminars, training, and prayer groups can support multiple areas within the company (Sapta, 2021).

Conclusion of the Literature Review

This literature review suggests that when Muslims lead in organizational contexts with an understanding of leadership rooted in their spiritual ideals, they may see greater productivity and better organizational outcomes. Additionally, the literature provides context around what qualities can be seen as related to spiritual leadership from a Muslim perspective; but a gap in the literature exists regarding how spirituality motivates leaders in the American Muslim millennial community.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This thesis seeks to understand the spiritual motivations for leadership among American Muslim millennial organizational leaders. This study takes a descriptive approach to researching these practices. Descriptive approaches focus on the lived experience and wisdom of human beings; they can bring multiple systems together to create a new understanding (Neubauer et al., 2019). A descriptive qualitative research study is the appropriate type of study because it seeks to how American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership? Semi structured interview allows for discussion, mitigate survey bias, and enable the researcher to obtain information about how the participants construct meaning (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Purpose Statement

This descriptive qualitative research study aims to understand the spiritual motivations for leadership among American Muslim millennial organizational leaders. There has been limited research into the role of leadership training and the intrinsic motivation of young American Muslim professionals. Most existing research focuses on Muslim communities outside of America and does not focus on young professionals as a demographic. This study is essential to bridging a gap among young Muslim professionals who do not feel motivated by secular leadership training and who are looking to find deeper meaning in their work by connecting it to their spiritual values.

Research Questions

The main research question is, "How does spirituality impact young American Muslim professionals who are leaders?" Research sub questions include:

1. How does the leadership in a Muslim Student Association provide motivation for leadership?
2. How do role models provide motivation for leadership?
3. How do spiritual practices such as prayer, helping others, and reading the Qu'ran provide motivation for leadership?

Research Design

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a descriptive approach unifies various perspectives from different participants. This study takes a descriptive approach in that it speaks to multiple experts on this issue, and its goal is to hear stories on what motivates them from their Islamic spiritual tradition.

Descriptive Approach

According to Kim, H., Sefcik, J. S., & Bradway, C. (2017), qualitative studies are descriptive and focus on discovering insights from experiences. A qualitative descriptive (QD) approach to this study was most applicable because it allows the researcher to examine real-life examples from the participants without constraints. According to Kim, H., Sefcik, J. S., & Bradway, C. (2017), a qualitative descriptive approach allows for flexibility and does not have rigid boundaries, allowing one to have extra practical applicability. Additionally, Kim, H., Sefcik, J. S., & Bradway, C. (2017) highlight how it allows for in-depth perspectives of participants and focuses on the key questions such as the who, where, why, and what of a situation that is not as readily understood. Ultimately, the researcher chose this approach because

his personal goal was to seek insights that did not fit one of Creswell and Poth's (2018) five categories (ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative, or case study).

Recruitment of Participants

This qualitative research study involves interviews with American Muslim millennial leaders between the ages of 25 and 35. Participants had to be from Southern California and had to hold positions as managers or directors of teams. Leaders who had never held a formal leadership position within a company that had generated over \$1 million in overall revenue were not eligible to participate. This revenue benchmark was to ensure leaders are solicited from companies that are established and are mid-sized in their capacity.

There were 25 participants in the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that 20 to 30 is ideal for a descriptive qualitative study or grounded theory.

Participants were solicited through professional Muslim networking groups on LinkedIn and email newsletter lists belonging to Muslim professional groups. These lists were provided by local professional group organizations. An outreach letter was prepared and sent to representatives and leaders with information regarding the study, requesting participants that meet the criteria. A secondary outreach message was prepared for LinkedIn and career networking platforms with information on the type of participants the study was seeking. Participants interested in taking part were provided with an email with details and potential dates for an interview.

When participants inquired and were accepted to participate in the research study, they were provided with a document via email that provided consent to the researcher. Once the researcher was provided with the signed document, a time was scheduled for an interview, and the interview began by going through key aspects of the informed consent form.

Instrumentation

This research used semi structured interviews, a method that allowed for open dialogue while adhering to a structure that helped the researcher understand what was needed for the study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). See Appendix A for the interview guide.

Data Collection

As mentioned above, this qualitative research study consisted of conducting semi structured interviews with key leaders. The interviews were comprised of 45- to 60-minute sessions conducted via Zoom technology.

Participant Information

The participants are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1:

Participants in this study

Name (pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	Career	Nationality	MSA Board Member
Leena	30	F	Social Worker	Pakistani	N
Rayyan	28	M	Nonprofit Executive	European	Y
Amr	38	M	Imam	Pakistani	Y
Mustafa	34	M	Nonprofit Executive	African American	Y
Hana	30	F	Program Manager	Indian	N
Hani	34	M	Engineer	Palestinian	Y
Wahhaj	36	M	Software Engineer	Palestinian	Y

Payim	30	F	Social Worker	Iranian	N
Maria	28	F	Consultant	Indian	Y
Saleem	35	M	Finance	Guyanese	Y
Breana	37	F	Therapist	Palestinian	Y
Qumar	30	M	Engineer	Indian	N
Sumaya	34	F	Nonprofit Executive	Egyptian	Y
Sharjeel	30	F	Scientist	Bangladeshi	Y
Baber	30	M	Nonprofit Executive	Pakistani	Y
Maulana John	38	M	Academic Dean	Pakistani	Y
Rayek	37	M	Religious Leader	Jordanian	N
Abdul	35	M	Therapist	Afghani	N
Tahir	33	M	Data Scientist	Sudanese	Y
Ijaz	30	M	IT Manager	Egyptian	Y
Maqlooba	34	F	Professor	Palestinian	Y
Hazem	35	M	Nonprofit Manager	Palestinian	Y
Razzak	38	M	Researcher	Pakistani	Y
Regina	28	F	Social Worker	Afghani	Y
Hamza	38	M	Medical Doctor	Pakistani	Y

Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the first step in a qualitative study is managing and organizing the data; the second step is reading and memoing ideas; the third step is describing and classifying themes; the fourth step is developing and accessing interpretations; and the final step is representing and visualizing the data. The present study lays the foundation

for potential books, literature, and classes developed from this insight. It can serve as a tool for organizations and employees to build their leadership capacity and professionalism. Personally identifiable information will be kept confidential and will not be released under any circumstances.

Data was recorded and transcribed in each interview. The data was organized according to key themes such as self-awareness, communication, relationship building, and other essential components of leadership. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), organizing data in articles is crucial for reducing data. All recordings were recorded in audio format and stored in Atlas TI. The transcripts of the tapes were organized based on the themes mentioned above. Atlas TI ensured all interviews were held correctly and information was correctly coded for easy access. Atlas TI also ensured that the analysis was conducted proficiently and had a solid theoretical foundation.

The data was further organized and coded into tables and figures to visually represent the meaning behind each theme according to Creswell and Poth (2018) and the best mapping practices. The thematic codes that emerged from this study were: Discovering leadership as a student; emulating role models and engaging in spiritual practices. The perspectives and parameters of each of these thematic codes are discussed in chapter 4.

Visualization was critical because it provided an understanding of what a framework could potentially look like and where to begin the journey of becoming a faith-driven Muslim leader.

Rigor and Validity

This study's approach to demonstrating credibility was to incorporate respondent validation and self-description/reflexivity (Long & Johnson, 2002). An audit trail was created in

Atlas TI, a qualitative research tool that hosts the audio transcripts of each participant interview. The tool allowed me to organize memos, quotes, and important pieces of information relevant to the study. The research also involved prolonged involvement in which the researcher has spent sufficient time visiting the organizations of several participants and has hands-on experience in the culture and social settings of the community.

Another approach to ensuring validity was self-description/reflexivity, in which a selection of participants was broad to ensure the 25 participants in the study were from different backgrounds in their career choices, ethnic background, location and gender. Finally, Once the interviews were completed, each respondent received a graphic with the relevant themes and feedback was requested. 3 participants responded by stating that they agreed with the findings and liked how it was laid out in the form of the chart. One participant, Mustafa responded by saying:

While it's great they learn leadership skills in their MSAs, where is the curriculum, mentors, and pathways to activism after MSA? Where is the training program to be active in all aspects from an Islamic point of view with terminology and examples. That's the glaring part that's missing in my mind.

Mustafa highlights an opportunity for future researchers and practitioners to dig deeper and begin to develop a new approach to the Islamic leadership experience by developing a clear training program.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study is the differing context for each participant. There could be differences affecting an employee's motivation based on whether the participant is in the medical field or another sector.

The second limitation is a lack of consideration of the types of millennials that are addressed. It is understood that the group of millennials being referenced is young American Muslim professionals, but what are not considered are the differences between the types of young American Muslim professionals based on socioeconomic status, cultural background, or any other demographics that might categorize or indicate which existing challenges of motivation contribute to a lack of understanding of their leadership practices.

Researcher Bias

It is important to note that I am an active leader within the American Muslim community and I have held positions in multiple capacities. I have significant experience as a Muslim leader, with more than 15 years in building organizations, which can impede my judgment when I am not conscious. I am particularly interested in this subject because I have seen the challenges and gaps within the ranks of young Muslim leaders. I have witnessed toxic environments, cultural misconceptions, and lawsuits from inexperienced Muslim leaders who have prioritized their positions over organizational principles. In this study, I am committed to being an independent investigator and seeking answers rather than reinforcing my biases. The biases that I have sought to be conscious of include assuming the influence of a particular definition of spirituality on participants and trying to direct participants towards a particular perspective through leading questions in interviews.

Summary of Research Approach

This is a descriptive qualitative study with 25 participants that responded to a recruitment flyer. The interviews were coded to identify themes and subthemes from this study on what leadership principles influential Muslim millennial organizational leaders followed. I used

prolonged involvement, self-description/reflexivity, and respondent validation to ensure rigor and validity.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The primary focus of this study is to understand how American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership?

The sub–research questions are as follows:

1. How does the leadership in a Muslim student association provide motivation for leadership?
2. How do role models provide motivation for leadership?
3. How do spiritual practices such as prayer, helping others, and reading the Qur'an provide motivation for leadership?

This study found ways that leadership in Muslim student associations (MSAs), role models, and spiritual practices all provide motivation for participants. The MSA provides an opportunity to find one's spiritual purpose and to develop leadership skills by serving on the board or various committees. Role models provide context for young leaders to incorporate spiritual purpose into their leadership roles. Moreover, spiritual practices provide motivation by helping young leaders seek God's assistance in decision-making to overcome stressful situations.

The findings chapter is divided into three main themes that emerged through the thematic coding process described in chapter 3. Each major theme addresses one of the sub questions above. The three major categorical codes (or themes) discussed below are:

1. Ways that leadership in a Muslim student association provides motivation for leadership.
2. Ways that role models provide motivation for leadership; and,
3. Ways that spiritual practices provide motivation for leadership.

Each section provides a description (as described in chapter 3) for how various participants expressed the major themes in their own words.

Ways That Leadership in a Muslim Student Association Provides Motivation for Leadership

The Muslim student experience helped participants in various ways. First, it fostered spiritual growth, as experienced by these young leaders on campus, where they felt a sense of responsibility to be the best representatives of their faith and actively fulfill their obligations with excellence. For example, Baber Khan was a frat boy when he started college and felt completely lost until he joined the Muslim Student Association. He found his purpose in the organization, which led him to become a leader and the president of the Muslim Student Association and paved the path to a career in organizational leadership at several organizations. Alongside that, he is completing an MBA in Business Management to continuously excel and grow his leadership abilities. Baber said, “I was living in a frat house in my third year, and I decided to leave all that kind of stuff behind and participate strongly with MSA.”

Secondly, 18 participants described how MSA honed their ability to excel in their careers through adopting soft skills and finding purpose in their work. Some of the participants were naturally inclined towards leadership because they had a parent who exhibited strong leadership skills; however, 18 of the participants exercised their leadership skills for the first time in high school or college through the Muslim Student Association. Maulana John is an influential organizational leader who works as a university dean and chaplain. He began his leadership journey in college where he found a passion. Maulana John explained as follows:

I was involved in the MSU at UCSD and then got involved in the leadership by being on the board one year as well and on various subcommittees and helping, like, plan and

organize events. But I would say it was, it was through, like, these student-led organizations.

Several participants had developed their initial leadership skills through their participation on student boards, in which they learned to collaborate, organize activities, and begin to leave an impact on campus. Hani is a skilled engineer and executive who found his passion for leadership at UC Berkeley. As a student, he was a reserved individual who was cautious about leadership. After his experience in MSA, he became an executive leader at his engineering firm and served as the board chairman of a community center that serves thousands of people every month. He explained as follows:

It was when I was at UC Berkeley, at the MSA, I was actively involved and then we had, like, an election and you know, you don't take leadership that serious, but I had a position on the board and you know working over the board, you get to see things get accomplished and you start liking the, you start, like, appreciating what leadership could do, like what it could actually build, what it can actually accomplish. So I started seeing that and I got more and more active at UC Berkeley with the MSA, with the Muslim Student Association there and it went from there. It just continued and once you, I think they say once you get a taste of leadership it never, it never goes away like you know, you always, it's something that just continues. So, I continued with other organizations and up until now.

Baber Khan described how he transitioned from the MSA to an organizational leadership role:

So that's where being part of MSA really helped me. When I was a president, I remember I had made a good friendship with John Bolton, who at the time was development

coordinator at Catholic Charities. And they were trying to get more involved with student groups. And I was like, “Yeah, sure guys, like anything you need, come on by.”

Basically, they were offering an enriching experience to the MSA, whereby it was like working with the Catholic charity would help us create avenues for volunteerism and to instill service-oriented values.

Baber described how he found not only his spirituality but also his career path through the MSA and he continuously grew in leadership roles as he entered the workforce. Baber’s engagement with the MSA taught him how to develop the soft skills and management skills needed to become a leader.

Saleem Bostany was a popular person all throughout his life and served in leadership roles through his primary school education. After graduating college, he went on to become a financial executive at a Fortune 500 media company, and he is seen as one of the company’s high performers. However, he truly grew as a leader in MSA. He recounted as follows:

It wasn’t until I became president of the UCLA MSA because at that point it’s not like now you’re an adult. Even in high school you still have, like, the faculty—there is kind of regulating what the student body does and the decisions that you’re making and things like that—whereas in college you’re considered an adult and you’re pretty much, you have the reins of the whatever club you’re leading.

Eighty percent of participants served as board members in MSA. The path to leadership after MSA differs based on the career route that one chooses—18 participants that served in an official capacity as student leader within the MSA have continued to excel in leadership roles through their career or have adopted a spiritual leadership mindset that has supported their career

advancement. MSA draws in these young leaders because they identify with their faith but it also provides an avenue to exercise leadership. The majority of participants in this study were board members with the Muslim Student Association while in college.

Attaining a position within MSA also provides a space to learn responsibility. Baber highlights that it was a transition for him to go from being a member of the club to a leader within the club. Baber said the following:

It was very natural because when I was public representative, I was already the face of the organization; I was making all the marketing materials, all of the flyers; I was very active on our Facebook group, posting about the events and activities coming up. I would attend all the meetings, and volunteer for all the events. It was very kind of easy, like the only thing that changed was like now instead of Khaled leading the meetings, it was myself. But also, it was a bit challenging because that year we had a—we had a, you know, a, a new board and I was going through like a bit of an extreme spiritual phase, right. Like it was like, you know, got practicing, became a practicing Muslim in my third year. And by the time I was president, like it kind of like I was becoming more and more extreme a little bit.

Baber was now forced to manage his time and balance all these different aspects of leadership while also navigating his own personal journey with the conflict of new ideas and the potential of falling into a very unbalanced spiritual state. This is also highlighted by John in the young professionals that he mentors. Many of these individuals are working full-time jobs while also volunteering in the community, and volunteering serves as a form of leadership training in that they have to serve selflessly and begin to refine their own leadership skills by doing things on a regular basis that they may not be comfortable with. These things may include public speaking

and dealing with conflicts daily. It can be particularly challenging for these individuals to do all this without compensation, purely for spiritual benefit. John highlights that some young professionals will even change their career through the process and begin to choose a career path that aligns more with their purpose. He highlights an example of a young lawyer who chose the path of helping those who cannot afford legal aid; in that way, her work has become a spiritual activity.

Ways That Role Models Provide Motivation for Leadership

Participants indicated that role models, both living and dead, played a significant role in shaping their outlook on leadership. The most common leaders that participants took as role models were the Prophet Mohammed, Malcolm X, parents, and mentors on college campus.

Prophet Mohammed

A commitment to studying the Prophet Mohammed's life is consistent among all the participants. In fact, the concept of role modeling is a central aspect of the life of the prophet Mohammed. The main trait participants sought to emulate was the Prophet Mohammed's character traits such as humility, patience, courage and persistence.

Maqlooba, a professor, finds inspiration from stories about the life of the Prophet Mohammed. She told me, "[My] work is really shaped by my Muslim identity and what I know of the teachings of... Mohammed (peace be upon him)." She said she continuously finds gems on how to refine her leadership from the Prophet Mohammed's life, including the stories of care, compassion, empathy, adhering to justice, and consistently speaking up against wrongdoing. The Prophet Mohammed is a unique spiritual leader in the sense that he not only provided a message about God but also developed a city, created economic viability, led an army, and established the

foundations of a community. Saleem mentions, “In a book about the 100 most influential people in history Michael Hart puts the Prophet Mohammed at #1.”

Saleem highlights another way in which the Prophet Mohammed serves as a role model: seeking advice.

[Mohammed is] the leader of the people. He’s the prophet of God. He’s receiving revelation, divine revelation. For all intents and purposes, he’s the one in charge, in command. Anything he says is correct. But before major battles, he would consult with the companions. “Do you guys think this is a good idea? Do you think we should fight back? Do you think we should lay back? What do you think we should do?” They would give their opinions, and then he would, you know, say you’re right, we should do this.

Sharjeel navigates failures by reflecting on the life of the Prophet, who saw obstacles as opportunities for growth:

Throughout my life it helped me crown myself in terms of knowing...how to deal with failure. Because I’m a scientist, there are a lot of experiments we do in the lab. Most of them fail. Part of being a scientist is understanding that failure is part of the process, right? Spirituality helps guide you through that because if you look at spiritual examples of prophetic examples of leadership, lots of times everything’s not going to go your way.

Rayyan explained that the Prophet Mohammed “just came to teach you good character you know. So that’s for me ... The prophet always promoted the middle path.” And some found solace in hearing about the prophet’s struggles. Breana, a therapist in LA who oversees the county’s diversity initiatives, describes how her everyday reflection on the Prophet Mohammed’s leadership keeps her grounded.

Just from parents' kind of reading stories to us about the Prophet Mohammed and having to take a stand, even if it's not the popular thing to do, right, with, with a lot of, with a lot of their followers or communities or people.

Another participant named Mustafa, a multiracial leader who works as a nonprofit executive and serves in a variety of community roles, explained as follows:

The prophet in them specifically, especially in the early days of Mecca. You know, all the hard, everything that they were, that they were doing, like how they would go about it. And even through all the difficulty in the hardship that they were going through, how they were, you know, able to persist with *dua* [calling on God], you know, I feel really does, you know, kind of help ground me spiritually at least [as a leader].

Mustafa describes how all he had to resort to was emulating the Prophet Mohammed. As he recalled, "There weren't any trainings. It was kind of a learn-on-the-job." So, he turned to the stories of the Prophet Mohammed's teachings as a guide.

The Prophet Mohammed was highlighted by several participants; he was courageous to speak the truth and ultimately be persecuted for it, even though it was against his own tribe.

Tahir said the following:

He must have been, like, one of the most persecuted people of all time. On many occasions where things weren't going his way, he handled it very well. Like for instance the year of sorrow when his wife died, his uncle who is also his protector died, and everybody around them was being persecuted for following his religion that he was bringing—not his religion, I should say, but the religion that he is the prophet of—and how he just handled it with patience. He knew that there was something on the other side, something more beneficial, so held his head up and kept on going.

Discernment is another aspect of leadership that requires a level of wisdom and skill. Rayyan highlights a story from the life of the Prophet Mohammed in which he prioritizes someone with power and wealth over somebody who was weak and frail in an instant, and God reprimands him for not discerning in that moment who is of higher priority. Rayyan said the following:

God corrected him. You can't. You know you made a mistake by ignoring the blind man, the poor man for this, you know, for the leader, for the clan leader. You know you don't know the value of somebody, but God sees the value. So, I think that's it, you know that, that that in itself is a, is a huge lesson of like you don't, you don't know really where the importance of things lie[s]. You know it's really; you know we have so little control over things.

The story highlights an important aspect of leadership: the ability to discern and prioritize. One may conclude that it is much more important to influence a person of wealth and power, but this story highlights the importance of not making the weak feel less prioritized because they lack a certain level of status or power. This level of discernment is also taught by Maulana John when training young leaders. John said, "It's really interesting to see how they basically pave their own way and we're there just to help them and guide them and whatever they choose." John consistently provides counsel so that they can understand how to gain the wisdom that is achieved through experiential learning, leading them to be better leaders who exercise their discernment.

Malcolm X

Participants were also drawn to Malcolm X as a modern Muslim leader whom they could resonate with. Baber explained, "Malcolm was like we all know about his sincerity, but he just

worked really, really hard, like sacrifice for the cause. And I aspire to be able to do that one day. I'm not there yet.”

Abdul, a therapist in San Diego County, described the inspiration he takes from Malcolm X:

You know he is a very prominent figure in the community who you know was self-taught to a greater, to majority level. Somebody who was a free thinker, you know smart guy, very intellectual, you know really came from nowhere but really was able to influence. He went about that and then kind of him finding himself again when he went on the edge then essentially seeing that turn around, right? Inspirational.

Participants found a variety of characteristics in Malcolm X, but at the core it was inspiration. The ability to be courageous is another aspect of leadership. One can find it difficult to navigate challenging situations on a regular basis, but stories of the Prophet Mohammed and Malcolm X resonate with these young leaders, because they personify courage. An example of this is seen in the life of Malcolm X, who gave his life to speak the truth, despite the threats on his life. As Rayyan highlights, Malcolm X even spoke up against the group that he was a part of, and put his life on the line, because he saw wrongdoing. Rayyan said:

I think, I think his ability to really adapt is big, right? Obviously the biggest, you know, most obvious example being when he transitioned from Nation of Islam to mainstream Islam. And to be able to basically admit that, you know, he was following that, his ideology, which he was so brilliant and so, you know, powerful at communicating was not entirely the, you know, the truth, but you know, basically his ability to be human and to say, hey, you know, this was, you know parts of this were wrong and but now we're doing this, you know, we fit, we fit, you know, now that we know that we're adapting.

So, I think that's huge. You know, just being able to be human. A lot, a lot of leaders let ego get in the way and they can't admit that they were ever wrong about anything because then they think they're going to be seen as weak or something like that or people are not going to trust them anymore. So, they get scared. But I think that is, you know, that was big obviously also, you know.

Both Mohammed and Malcolm X were courageous in their leadership, which highlights a level of authenticity to these young leaders who are seeking a role model to channel as well as whose lead to follow. Twenty-one of the participants found role models on the college campus that were significant in pushing them to achieve more. Still, only one participant could identify the significance of a professional mentor in their career that has helped pave their path forward to rise above leadership ranks. Role models did not also consist of living role models, the Prophet Mohammed was also a significant role model that shaped the participants' understanding of leadership which included his communication style, mindful behavior, and soft skills.

Parents

Another critical role model that a minority of participants had—but one that played an important role in shaping their leadership—was their parents. Participants who had parents who were leaders often had a natural inclination towards leadership. Sumaya explained, “Mom and I are both very involved in the community different ways, and that has always been involved at the message, either as a teacher for young people or eventually in board positions.” Maria said,

And so, I think I saw that a lot of [leadership activity] from just my parents to my siblings and then family members ... My parents have always been the, the catalyst for any type of leadership that I've had or any type of leadership qualities that I've learned and picked

up ... Dad was on the mosque board, when I was born, and he hadn't, he stepped off the board after shortly afterwards. But my mom was always heavily involved.

Mustafa agreed with the others: "My parents were big kind of leadership inspirations for me." Mustafa, like many others, had parents who were involved in the community through board positions and in their professional careers. These young participants who had parents who were involved saw their parents as an inspiration to continue a similar path of leadership.

Mentors

Finally, on a day-to-day basis, young leaders also find themselves consulting spiritual leaders on areas of self-development and seeking counsel regarding careers and leadership.

Maulana John stressed the importance of mentorship and said the following:

I think perhaps the most important is having someone older than you that you that you're accountable to. So having that mentor in your life that is a shift, your spiritual guide, you're accountable to them, that you check in with them regularly and you kind of share what you're doing.

Sharjeel described how older mentors can provide life lessons:

One thing people should do more is to go to their elders, just sit and talk to them. Just sit and talk. So these are a few things that I feel you have to have an open mindset in order to learn and constantly grow as a leader.

This section shows that participants primarily had four categories of role models in their lives who drastically shaped their leadership. The first of these was the Prophet Mohammed. His life story served as a beacon of knowledge for most participants, and it set the foundation and framework for their acquisition of soft skills such as persistence, noble character, and sincerity.

Second, Muslim leaders, including people such as Malcolm X, serve as a beacon of hope and a voice of resistance against anti-Muslim propaganda. A modern role model which was significant was Malcolm X, although he had a unique experience during the civil rights era his demeanor and conviction was an important factor in these young leaders being driven by their faith in a modern context. Third, participants whose parents were active leaders also found inspiration from them to follow in their footsteps. Sixteen participants had parents who were leaders to some extent. A minority of participants had parents who were not involved and who had a negative impact on their lives. Finally, one of the most impactful influences in the life of these young leaders were spiritual mentors who were involved on the college campus; most of these mentors were Muslim college professors who served as advisors to MSA. This opportunity provided customized advice to these young leaders on how to navigate personal challenges and yet continuously pushed them to grow as leaders. These four role model categories were the most common theme discussed by Muslim leaders regarding the role of spirituality in their leadership.

Ways That Spiritual Practices Provide Motivation for Leadership

Spiritual practices are critical for the participants of this study in different ways. Prayer is a central practice in the Muslim faith. Prayer in Islam is unique in that it is mandated to take place five times a day and involves several steps, including the physical acts of prostrating and bowing. This form of prayer is immersive and is meant to put people in the complete presence of God. Alongside this mandated prayer, people pray throughout the day with *dhikr*, which involves repetitive statements made internally, glorifying God and putting oneself in a constant state of spiritual mindfulness. Another practice that is relevant to these leaders is reading and reflecting on Quranic verses and spiritual statements. Often, these wisdom statements refer to hope, mercy,

patience, and a number of other qualities that tie back to leadership. Finally, being of a service mindset is also a noble trait in which one's service to people is seen as an act of service to God.

Prayer Helps with Focus and Self-discipline

Prayer is one of the most critical spiritual practices for leaders in this study, from the corporate executive at a Fortune 500 company to the doctor at a leading hospital. There is a level of consciousness around aligning one's day with the formal Islamic prayer, which takes place five times a day and has a series of movements and sayings that go along with the prayer.

The impact of Muslim prayer is not sufficiently studied, but it certainly provides meaning for individuals based on the context of what they are going through. In the case of the young professionals in this study, one can witness that prayer is valuable during their daily routine at work when they realize they feel stressed, and they need to refocus. However, that meaning varies based on the individual and the challenges they are dealing with. Prayer is primarily conducted individually, but it has a communal aspect to it that happens on Friday afternoons, in which people congregate to hear a sermon and engage in group prayer.

One aspect of praying five times a day for these young American Muslim leaders is that it requires a level of self-discipline to pause throughout the day and plan around these prayers. However, as we see in the life of Maqlooba, she mentions the importance of prioritizing these prayers because they put life into perspective and prevent her from burning out by enabling her to pause to manage her stress and become mindful of her individual state.

Wahhaj is a software engineer of Palestinian descent who works in Silicon Valley and was previously a leader in MSA. He explains that he keeps himself grounded through prayer:

So we learn the activities that we can pursue, like whether it's through a prayer, you know, praying extra prayers, nightly prayers, giving, giving charity, you know, reading

stories of the prophets in the past and see how they, it went through challenges, makes us grounded and you know, we're not the only ones going through these challenges and come up with ways to, you know, lessen our stress, get our minds clear, get back to focusing on what we're trying to do.

Dr. Hamza explains the role of nonformal Islamic prayers that keep him going through the challenges of witnessing life-and-death moments on a regular basis. He explains as follows:

You know, saying a quick prayer or saying a quick draw to, like, kind of keep you steady and keep going forward. Sometimes we don't have that time as physicians to kind of really reflect on that because we're from, you know, you're here pronouncing one patient and then you get a call from the ER to admit another patient and then must just rapidly move from A to B. Sometimes we suppress those kinds of things. But when you come home and kind of unpack, I think you just kind of have to count your blessings and that's kind of what's keeping me grounded, I think.

Rayyan is a young, energetic recent college graduate who completed his bachelor's degree at UCLA and works as the Chief Operating Officer at a local nonprofit organization. He describes prayer as a reminder to challenge his ego:

I think that it's very humbling. You know, when we talk about, you know, not only ego get in the way, it definitely when you, when you're like when you force yourself to, you know, five times a day to bow down to God, it's like it's a constant reminder. You're not, you know, you couldn't really be here without him. So, I think that, you know, it's a check. It's an ego check. It's a, you know, a good, a good break too. You know, to kind

of just reflect, keeps you, keeps you thoughtful, keeps you from getting stagnant. I think it just, you know, helps you feel like there's a purpose, you know. So, I think, you know, prayer is always a reminder.

Abdul explained as follows:

I think prayers are probably one of the best ways and has always been a great, it gives me a great sense of clarity and even before making decisions, I usually, you know, would pray and that helps me make, I will take calm and cognizant decisions. No matter how big or how small a decision is, I always try doing that.

Maqlooba, a college professor and past MSA president, said the following:

Trying to squeeze the five prayers, given a very hectic work schedule, is very important and it actually really helps to calibrate throughout the day and just get away from the stress of the, you know, the hustle of the day... Because there are instances, you know, in leadership where you do have to make quick decisions, but you know, just kind of taking that two-minute break in between really helps me clear up my mind and provides a little bit more cohesiveness.

She added, "You know, saying a quick prayer or saying a quick draw to, like, kind of keep you steady and keep going forward." Maqlooba's engagement with prayer is a practical leadership skill, if one were to look at it from that lens. From one perspective, it may seem like a purely spiritual act, but in this situation Maqlooba describes how prayer enhanced her leadership capabilities by highlighting how it helped her clear her mind and manage stress.

Qumar, who is the chairman of a multimillion-dollar organization, described the usefulness of prayer in a similar way:

Whenever there's disagreements and such, you know, I try to do at least...one quick prayer to kind of just settle my mind and help me understand if I, you know, just need a breather. And if I still believe in what I'm saying, then, you know, maybe that might be the best route, path of action.

Although prayer is a consistent part of life for the participants, there is a distinction between prayer and other spiritual practices. As Rayek explained, "And so if you look at the—you say the term spirituality. One of the synonyms to the Islamic term spirituality is self-development, right, self-development. So ... you want to compare Islamic spirituality." Leena stated the following:

So, to be able to able to spiritually check yourself and hold yourself accountable, it's very, very important. Because if you don't question your decisions in terms of how, how is it holding up to your values and principles and is it doing good in society like that comes from having, trying to have a pure heart and trying to do good, right? So, it's absolutely essential. And I feel like those groups tend to approach people with more love and treating people with diseases of the heart as like just a disease versus like this person is all corrupt. Do you know what I mean? And so I feel like treating people with love and letting them come into their space. And like you said, purifying their heart. I feel like it's guiding them and making them better people instead of like just shunning them away.

Ishfaq, who leads a team of scientists, referred to "Spirituality outside of the ritualistic aspect where I take breaks to pray during the workday. Outside of that, it helps guide my communication, guide my professionalism and pursuit of excellence." The same participant said:

Because at the end of the day at work when you're leading, you can't take a back seat and not want to not have to do your best, spiritually you're pushing the pursuit and be their

best right? But I feel spirituality helps me in pursuing excellence and from that angle and making sure my team is accountable for doing their best and that's how you can set a precedent in your team for excellence by. Through spirituality, I want to expect also when you communicate to your team, you communicate with honesty. There's no deception, there's no corporate, like, corporate or like job toxicity when there's honest communication and expectations. And I feel spirituality helps ground those principles in the professional world, which I've seen a lot of people complain about in the professional field. But I'm glad that I have not faced that myself as much over the years.

Prayer has a role not only in helping participants manage their stress but also in helping them focus and manage their time better. It also teaches discipline and organization skills because each of the prayers is prescribed at a certain time period. Each participant has a unique benefit they gain from prayer, but in summary it can be seen as a place to self-reflect and connect with a higher power, which supports one's leadership activity.

Helping Others is a Form of Spirituality

Spirituality is extremely broad. It covers a variety of different areas, but for the young individuals in this study, including Breana, it addresses a central question that often goes unanswered: What is the purpose of one's existence? Breana explained, "Knowing that we have a purpose in life, everybody has a purpose and wherever we are, it's like we have something to be done. So, I'm either contributing positively, or I am in essence like a nuisance to society."

Leena described her secular job in social work as an outflow of her faith:

I feel like social work is honestly an Islamic career path because you're literally just giving. Like there's no — it's literally just, it's a giving career. Do you know what I

mean? And you're, you have to be attentive, you have to practice active listening. You have to treat that person like they're the best person in front of you and you can't be impatient with them. You can't treat them like they're knowing you. You know what I mean? You must treat their feelings and emotions like everything with such care and respect that I feel like you really must take in prophetic qualities and just interact with another person and then also figure out resources. Like sometimes, you know, when I don't want to see a patient and I'm exhausted, I'm like, no, God has trusted me to like talk to this person.

Participants described their spirituality and faith as key factors in deciding what career path they chose. Regina mentioned, "The faith component has always been a part of that. And sometimes in a way where it almost feels guilty to pursue other career paths. I'm like, they're not helpful [towards others]."

Participants also described their ability to make an impact on the job with their spirituality. Maqlooba said, "I try to be very God-conscious. In all the decisions that I make, as you know, first and foremost as a Muslim person, because I'm always aware and I always remind myself and remember that whatever decisions I make will impact other individuals and as such, I'm responsible for that to God before an institution."

Tahir described how his dealings with people were rooted in his spirituality.

I mean just in the way that you deal with people, especially those who are maybe like...lower ranked than you in the company or in the corporate structure. How you treat them, how you treat the people who need help from you, how you treat your colleagues,

your coworkers, things along those lines. There's a lot of overlap there with the things that I learned prior to joining the corporate world.

Shaykh Rayek makes the case that there is significant overlap between the secular leadership concept of altruism and Islamic spirituality. He said the following:

There's a lot of overlap between what the secular, what secular research has found in terms of effective leadership and the spiritual, the Islamic spiritual [tradition]. And so you find a lot of overlap; you'll find a lot of the same ideas. So for example, in this book *A Give and Take* by Adam Grant, he talks about, you know that this personality of the giver personality and the personality of the taker personality versus the matcher. And what you'll find is that someone who has this taker mentality is, OK, well, how can I exploit this person in front of me for my own interest? But why are they behaving this way? Where's that coming from? And you'll find that, oh, it's coming from a type of arrogance, self-absorption, selfishness, etc. And then when you look at the Islamic spiritual [tradition], you'll find out these are major spiritual ailments or ailments of the, of self-development, right?

Hamza is a Pakistani–American doctor who found himself struggling to navigate the pressures of being a doctor and balancing his faith. He also transitioned from being an MSA president to becoming a leader at the hospital in his role as a doctor. He explains:

When we're pursuing our own kind of goals in this worldly life, we sometimes put Islam in like spirituality on the back burner. And so my whole thing was that that is actually a means towards being a better leader. It's just incorporating those spiritual aspects in your life will make you a better Muslim, make a better leader, make a better doctor, make a

better lawyer, make a better engineer, whatever you want to do. It helps in every part of your life. And so just for example, one example is that lost father like commands the Muslims to justice and to excellence from [the] Qur'an. I think it's chapter 16 verse 90 in the law yet more they were sent so like and then there's several Hadid that basically are commanding the, the Muslims to do the best you can do—whatever you do, to do it in the most excellent way, in the most proficient way, in the most beautiful way.

Alongside Hamza's excellence in helping others, individuals like Hani explain why Hani decided helping others was going to be a critical part of leadership. He describes a moment when, as a young professional, he was struggling to manage his expenses and another Muslim professional helped him out but refused to take compensation:

It's like the small community efforts that people make. Another guy when I when I got a job near Irvine and we know how expensive real estate is over there and this, this one brother, he congratulated me and I told him I'm having trouble finding housing and he's like, "Will you stay in my place?" (which is somewhat nearby). And you know when it came time to pay the rent he was like, "No, don't worry about it. You just give it to me when you finally move out. We'll figure it out later." And he would never accept it. And then you know I stayed there, you know, about six months and for the project. And when the project was finally over, he, I tried to pay him for the whole six months and he refused to take it. I forced it. I gave him, you know, I gave, I left the money on the table, and I left his house, and he sent the money back and he sworn all he's like, "I will not take this money." He's like, "I did this just to be rewarded."

Hani described this incident as a mindset shift that made him rethink what helping others would look like as a leader, and he began to incorporate that into his everyday leadership. The man who Hani met was an MSA member; he had little or no connection to him otherwise, yet he was committed to helping alleviate his burden. Spirituality plays a role in shaping the everyday lives of these helpers who see their work as God's work, and every struggle and challenge they navigate is tied back to God in some way, so they feel an extra responsibility to be diligent in the services they provide to people.

Reading the Qur'an Provides Focus and Purpose

The Qur'an can be described as a spiritual text that consists of a variety of stories and ideas that guide people towards the remembrance of God and the life of the Prophet Mohammed. Young leaders find solace in the Qur'an, as they read about the life of the Prophet Mohammed. They can draw inspiration and strength from his stories of perseverance, discipline, patience, focus, and drive towards building a spiritual community. The Qur'an consists not only of theological claims but also of stories about daily life, which include examples of commerce. In fact, the Prophet Mohammed's life is particularly of interest because he also was a merchant in his younger days and perhaps had a good understanding of the world of business. However, we understand from the stories of participants like John and Razzak, who both completed their degrees from a secular university alongside a theological university, that theological training is not enough to provide young leaders in understanding how to lead a business. John highlights the importance of mentorship to young professionals providing recent graduates with an understanding of introducing leadership principles to theological graduates looking to become organizational leaders. Amr differs in highlighting the importance of learning from entrepreneurs

and the great business leaders of our time by which one can gain insight that can be supported by spirituality.

Wahhaj is a software engineer of Palestinian descent who works in Silicon Valley and was previously a leader at MSA. He explains how verses from the Qur'an and sayings from the Prophet Mohammed motivate him at work every day:

The Islamic teachings mention that for a person to struggle and strive to help his neighbor or his brother or sister in humanity is more beloved to God than someone who just sits in the mosque on their own praying all day and night and just focusing on themselves. We learned that being of service is a form of worship and benefit to society. And that of itself, for me is one of my biggest, I mean motivators in life.

Sharjeel, a scientist and community leader whose parents migrated to California from Bangladesh, finds his leadership at work to be a spiritual exercise:

Yeah, there is one that I learned early and that's been a very, very essential part in everything I do, not just in leadership. I think we're instructed to do good, promote good, do good and forbid evil, right? So as Muslims, we're supposed to promote good and forbid evil. And I feel that's what I try to do in every aspect of my life, from community work, volunteering, work, personal life and professional work is wherever I see good, I try to go promote it, and wherever I see something bad or negative happening, I try to prevent it, or try to at least advise to prevent it or do something trying to prevent evil. There's the definitions of good and evil, and different people have different definitions, but some are clear, I feel religiously or spiritually. When you're [spiritual], there's things that are clearly good and clearly evil that is easy to discern. So I feel that verse in the

Qur'an where it says promote good then forbid evil, that is something that...really, really hits me. Another one is pursuit of excellence, subject when the subject won't be the front runners and everything. So that's, I feel that's motivating, very motivating. And as a Muslim I want to be the frontrunner.

Saleem Bostany describes how a chapter from the Qur'an on consultation shapes his leadership philosophy:

The people that you work with or even the people that work for you. There's a whole Surah in the Qur'an called Surah the Shura—this, this the chapter of consultation, the OR of seeking counsel. There's a verse within that, that, that God praises, that Allah praises. The people who seek counsel when they have an affair to that needs to be carried out.

Although prayer serves as the primary source of comfort for these leaders, who organize their days around the five prayer times, the ongoing nourishment that prayer provides is seen during difficult moments. Some leaders will find comfort in the reminders from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, and this will enable them to be mindful of their next actions. Some will actively utilize prayers as a means of checking one's ego and practicing humility through the reminder that God is in control and no matter how hard they work, ultimate power and ability belongs to God. These spiritual practices are not only ritualistic but also practical in the ways they direct these young leaders in being conscious before taking the next step.

Developing Character is a Form of Spirituality

Shaykh Rayek pointed out several key ways in which Islamic spirituality provides an opportunity to grow as a leader by addressing detrimental character flaws such as selfishness,

arrogance, and other negative issues of the heart. Growing out of these flaws requires constantly looking internally.

Payim, a social worker who has experience serving vulnerable families in Southside Compton, describes spirituality and her ability to grow:

Spirituality and leadership is being a servant, basically. So, and I think that's really informed by, like, the prophetic tradition, because prophets were not spoiled individuals. They were not like, I mean they had different socioeconomic classes, obviously. So, I don't mean it in that sense. But I mean, they weren't spoiled in that they didn't have easy missions. They were honestly working the hardest of everybody for the cause. So, I think spirituality really adds like a blanket of humility over whatever I could think of as leadership. Like I think being a leader is a huge burden. I think it's a painful job. I think it's an honor, but it's not something I, like, seek.

Payim ties her spirituality and leadership to being a servant and makes the case that it is a burden and an honor to take on the role of leadership and it must be done in a state of humility.

Leena, another social worker in East LA, says she feels leadership is a form of trust of God:

And they are here because it's an *amana* [an attitude of trust towards God]. Like I need to take care of it. So really, like, I feel like a lot of it factors into my career path because honestly like this it's a, obviously there's like moments that are rewarding and fulfilling, but overall, like it's very depressing and exhausting. You know and it becomes very tasking because you're just really just taking on everyone's most depressing moments of their lives and it's really like it's truly just in a manner at that point, like you just have to take care of these people because there's trust involved.

Leena takes her job as a social worker and leader seriously and sees the difficult moments as part of her *amana* and relationship with God. She believes that God will provide her with blessings from God for fulfilling her *amana*. Saleem describes a story he recalls in which a Muslim caliph, Omar ibn Al-Khattab, cares for a poor elderly woman despite her anger towards him:

Umar finds a mother and her children, and the children are crying because they don't have food. And she blames the leader of the people. She doesn't know she's talking to the leader of the people. So, he goes and he gets the food himself, even though he has a helper with him and he says no, I'm going to know, I'm going to be the one who's going to be accountable for these people. He goes and he prepares, and he cooks the food for them. And then he stays to make sure that they're happy and enjoying and he stays until the children stop crying and that they're happy and playing.

Saleem highlights this story in the context of building one's leadership service around the needs of the people; he argues that true leadership is when one can provide a level of due diligence and care for the people and shows character in this moment. Sharjeel makes the case that personal qualities of character are important in leadership. Sharjeel describes that his first job came not from his skills but from his honesty, which is rooted in his spirituality. Sharjeel said:

The first job that I got, I was the least experienced person, but I got it but because I could have [lied] and said what I wanted to during the interview process, I could have said a few things which would make me stand out as like, oh, this person is experienced, more experienced than this of that nature. But being honest is what got me that job. They said we were looking for somebody who is young, energetic, passionate, and willing to learn.

But if somebody, if so, if I had gone on and not been honest about it, I would not have gotten my first job, which was the key to getting into a leadership role that I have gotten into now.

Honesty is a quality that can be seen as a critical part of spirituality because it emphasizes that despite the outcome, one will put trust in God and state the truth.

Often it can be difficult to identify how consultation could be a spiritual act, but in this story Saleem highlights a prophetic quality around seeking advice in situations as a leader. Sharjeel describes another critical spiritual trait he appreciates in a leader, which is striving for excellence:

Spirituality, outside of the ritualistic aspect where I take breaks to pray during the workday, outside of that, it helps guide my communication, guide my professionalism and pursuit of excellence, right? Because at the end of the day at work when you're leading, you can take a back seat and not want to not have to do your best, but spiritually you're pushed to be their best right? But I feel spirituality helps me in pursuing excellence and from that angle and making sure my team is accountable for doing their best and that's how you can set a precedent in your team to for excellence. Through spirituality, I want to expect also when you communicate to your team, you communicate with honesty. There's no deception, there's no corporate, like corporate or like job toxicity when there's honest communication and expectations. And I feel spirituality helps ground those principles in the professional world, which I've seen a lot of people complain about in the professional field. But I'm glad that I have not faced that myself as much over the years.

Sharjeel makes an interesting point about excellence in putting in the extra effort as a spiritual act in all areas of his work, and he expresses gratitude for the challenges he has had the opportunity to overcome. Another interesting group of leaders are people who have a background in theology and are now leading a nonprofit but don't have the professional and management skills, although they do have a spiritual background. Some struggle because it is not a world they are exposed to, but they have experience with an MSA and then pursue theology school. Razzak is a researcher who is the director of a religious nonprofit; he describes the challenge of leading with a purely theological background:

Yeah, I think it's a complete mismatch of training and then expectations of the roles.

Again, this is no fault of those institutions. When you have global, you have these institutions like whether it be Islamic University of Medina or in Pakistan or in Egypt. All these Islamic universities acknowledge that they have one predominant responsibility which is to provide a general Islamic education for folks who are going to be from all over the world and doing different things with this knowledge, right? They're not in the business of creating necessarily, like they're not in the business of creating leaders. Let's be very blunt.

Razzak highlights a unique challenge that leaders who have only spiritual training face: They don't have the balanced experience needed to run an organization. Razzak highlights that these leaders must resort to learning:

One of them is continuous professional development while you're on the job. It's like, well, I recognize I don't have all these skills, so what can I do in my role as a leader in this organization? Well, let me take a public speaking class. Let me go and take a class on project management. Let me go and take a class on dealing with interpersonal conflict in

community settings, nonprofit management, so on. You start to fill in all those gaps one by one by one. The other route, which is also very common, is actually to leave your professional position for a period of time to go and pursue that information almost full time. That might be where people go and pursue a master's degree or a bachelor's degree or some other course of study where they feel like, well, look, I can dedicate myself to getting that skill set, so I can now reintegrate myself back into a community leadership position.

Razzak highlights the challenges of balancing spiritual and leadership skills in the modern world. However, this makes the case for developing an integrated approach to leadership that incorporates spirituality and modern leadership techniques that are prevalent in corporate America. A contextual approach to leadership can potentially serve as a beacon of hope for young American Muslim millennial leaders. Maulana John, who leads a seminary for young professionals, makes the case for a professional career and theological training:

Students should not have to sacrifice like a regular career in order to pursue scholarship, like they could do both simultaneously. You could be a doctor, a lawyer, engineer, a therapist or whatever, and you can be a scholar at the same time, right? And it works.

John describes himself as a mentor to many young professionals in these leadership roles, providing them with guidance. He likes to mentor and teach these young professionals and place them into community settings to serve the community. He says:

They want to be under the mentorship of myself. So hopefully train them enough to be able to provide, you know that, that spiritual counsel and guidance to the community as well the second batch. They're giving lectures and talks all over there and they're doing well. One of them is more like behind the scenes and helping out with, like, research and

writing and translating. Others are involved in Saturday school, Sunday school, while maintaining a career at the same time. So it's really interesting to see how students basically pave their own way and we're there just to help them and guide them in whatever they choose.

Summary of Findings

Participants highlighted to varying degrees how spirituality kept them grounded in their leadership roles in a significant way. Spirituality played a role in helping them manage stress, stay motivated, strive towards self-improvement, and connect with role models. Maulana John describes spirituality as a means of becoming a model employee at work:

Just the way they carry themselves at work or like they're like a model employee perhaps. You know, they're people that have excellent time management. Their productivity is through the roof, and they take time off from work to pray.

Participants highlighted how the Prophet Mohammed played a role in shaping their understanding of soft skills. Stories from his life, including moments of humility, compassion, and service, shaped the way they see themselves in everyday life. Malcolm X is seen as the most authentic voice on Islam in the United States and was visibly the fiercest spokesperson. His autobiography serves as a guide on navigating the challenges of modern life and redeeming oneself despite few resources. Malcolm X's leadership style perhaps added a unique American flavor that differs from the Prophet Mohammed, in the sense that Malcolm X's core message was around the issue of justice, an issue that, for young American Muslims is a contextual application of faith in action.

In conclusion, the qualitative study on millennial Muslim organization leaders had three key themes, which included their time in MSA, role models, and spiritual practices. In Chapter 2,

the literature touched upon similar areas, such as Islamic leadership, workplace spirituality, the Prophet Mohammed, and the Muslim student experience. In chapter 5, I will discuss the literature related to these themes, and I will explore implications of the research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This descriptive qualitative research study aims to understand how American Muslim millennial leaders perceive the spiritual motivations for engaging in leadership. There has been limited research into the role of leadership training and the intrinsic motivation for young American Muslim professionals. Most existing research focuses on Muslim communities outside of America and does not focus on young professionals as a demographic. This study is essential to bridging a gap among young Muslim professionals whose motivation may be different from that which is found in secular leadership theories, and who are looking to find deeper meaning in their work by connecting it to their spiritual values. Below I discuss themes that emerged from interviews from young American Muslim millennial leaders. As chapter 4 showed, they mentioned themes that included the Muslim Student Association, role models (parental influence, Prophet ,hj example, and the Life of Malcolm X) and spiritual practices.

How Student Leadership Opportunities Develop Leaders

One's educational journey has a significant impact on one's leadership. Student groups and clubs play a role in providing students with an opportunity to engage in experiential learning through organizing activities, planning events, and negotiating issues that impact the campus climate. The Muslim Student Association is a particular group that is relevant for young Muslims to engage in spiritual activities and build friendships on campus (Mubarak, 2007). According to Mubarak (2007) the primary reason people join the Muslim student association is to "better understand their religion." Yet over its 60 years of existence in America, it has been the subject of great activity and controversy (Mubarak, 2007). The Muslim Student Association not only organizes spiritual activities but often will speak on political issues particularly that are taking place (Mubarak, 2007). However, an area that is not studied enough and about which there is not

enough literature is the role of the MSA in building future leaders and how it can be further refined to develop leaders in a shifting landscape.

Existing literature on student leadership opportunities tends to speak generally about student club highlights on cultural affinity groups, fraternities and student clubs that focus on academic interests (Smith & Chenoweth, 2015). However, the Muslim student association differs from these groups because of the central spiritual focus within its mission. The Muslim student association is a group that is not studied enough from the lens of a group that builds leaders. It has been studied as a group considering Islamophobia and a cultural phenomenon, but the Muslim student association has a greater meaning than just a cultural artifact (Mubarak, 2007).

The present study highlights the impact of the group on their spirituality into their careers and highlights how it assisted in identifying a balance of spirituality and organization leadership. The MSA also instills a purpose that is beyond the type of career one may want to pursue or what one is passionate about. The association provides a meaning for living and promotes habits that shape one's soft skills and character development as highlighted by participants. Additionally, it is interesting how participants highlighted that MSA was a pivotal point of their leadership journey but perhaps had not reflected on what that journey did for them. According to Shamma (2009), Muslim students in college begin to test boundaries around friendships and engaging with people outside of their shared heritage and culture. Additionally, Shamma (2009) highlights:

This absence in the campus diversity literature is remarkable in light of two recent national surveys. These show that show 76% of young Arab Americans of traditional college age, 18 to 29 years, have experienced personal discrimination (Arab American

Institute [AAI], 2007). They also indicate that 50% of Muslim Americans between 18 and 24 have reported discrimination in school and the workplace (Muslims in the American Public Square, 2004). Given these alarming statistics, this paper represents a pioneering effort in investigating whether the post 9-11 backlash against Arabs and Muslims has penetrated community college campuses.

However, despite the discrimination, the Muslim student association serves as a beacon of hope and opportunity for young American Muslims to navigate challenges. According to Mustafa and Javdani (2016), religious settings help American Muslim youth process negative experiences and focus on a healthy collective alternative. Additionally, they highlight that these spaces create a sense of belonging and develop a positive sense of identity (Mustafa & Javdani, 2016).

Some scholarly literature focuses on the broad nature of student clubs related to function and how these could be organized. One study focuses on how high impact practices highlight a formal process of principles that contributes to the leadership education practice on college campuses, key items mentioned include orientation and training, monitoring and intentionality (Priest & Clegorne, 2015). While these principles are beneficial to student organizations, the MSA differs in the sense that the organization has strong ties to mosques which keep people engaged prior to and after college, which is unique in the sense that the members who continue to attend a mosque will have the opportunity to meet other members of the same network and have a community or professionals they can connect with. The reason this is significant is because formalizing the students into a particular structure can take away from the natural socialization process that takes place currently within these groups.

A caveat that is highlighted by Priest and Clegorne (2015) is the ability to integrate practices in an organic non-formal way. In the case of the MSA, the offering of communal prayers 5 times a day creates opportunities for Muslim students to connect in an organized fashion as they meet fellow Muslims for prayer. Alongside that, spiritual activities such as fasting and listening to lectures on spirituality are additional ways that these student club members can congregate. This is unique in the sense that the MSA taps into a pre-existing need among Muslim students and then provides an opportunity for them to serve in leadership roles.

An opportunity that was highlighted by Priest and Clegorne (2015) is the high school connection, they argue that high impact begins at the high school level. This is an area of opportunity for the MSA which is primarily a college-focused student club with minimal action on high school campuses. Only one participant, Saleem, in this study said his high school had an MSA. MSAs could potentially expand their pipeline by promoting MSA growth on student campuses and begin the MSA journey from an earlier age and provide more leadership opportunities to a younger demographic.

The consistent area of concern that is highlighted by participants is the lack of formal leadership training within the MSA context. Student leaders are provided mentors to prepare themselves to lead but there is no formal training that provides them with the tools necessary to lead. It potentially could be helpful to train these MSA leaders in the skills needed through workshops and leadership coaching that focuses specifically on areas of management, communication, and other areas of leadership, rather than taking a completely informal approach to training leaders.

Implications for Practice: What the Industry Should Do

The MSA provides an opportunity to find one's spiritual purpose and develop leadership skills by serving on the board or various committees. In a time when organizations are struggling to find young leaders to take roles within their companies because millennials are unmotivated and struggle with purpose, the MSA provides a platform to provide young Muslim leaders with an opportunity to taste both. The research participants in this project provide a number of stories and practical examples from their life about how MSA was an opportunity for them to practice their leadership skills which includes negotiation, decision-making and project management for the very first time.

The activities of an MSA involve campus-wide events, advocating on behalf of Muslim students, and creating opportunities for Muslim students to practice their faith on campus through a variety of means. Each participant shared a similar but unique experience around their time in MSA and its role in shaping their leadership ambitions. People that served and were involved in their MSA continued after college to continuously seek leadership roles in their post-college life. However, there is a gap which exists that indicates that there is little support to nurture their spiritual life once a student becomes a working professional; the onus falls onto the leader to find resources and begin to navigate leadership as a working professional while keeping up their spiritual practices and habits that contribute to their motivation. This is an opportunity for companies that want to expand their diversity initiatives to consider how they can support these Muslim young professionals and maximize their productivity and motivation through providing the spiritual leadership training for an organizational context.

Companies would do well to take notice of Muslim student association leaders and engage this highly motivated group of students who are driven by purpose. If companies invest

early on into MSA leaders, they potentially could have a pipeline of young leaders to recruit from and expand their talent pool. These leaders exhibit a high interest in developing soft skills and are particularly focused on personal development and ethical leadership rooted in their spiritual tradition which promotes fairness. Alongside that, the diversity of ethnic backgrounds of these leaders also provides companies with an opportunity to recruit talent that has a better understanding of various cultures. The Muslim student population has a vast variety of cultures and can provide more tolerance and understanding of various cultural ideals.

Universities also should consider investing more resources in student groups like the Muslim student association. Twenty-one of the participants in this study served in a primary leadership capacity within the Muslim student association. And then all of them, within a few years after graduating, held influential roles within organizations and were still motivated to pursue excellence in their careers. Currently, there is little formal structure to provide support to these students' transitions from college to young professionals. If companies had a system to identify these leaders, then perhaps they would expand their talent pool. But alongside that universities can strategically invest in these student leaders and highlight the experimental learning that their university campus offers.

Additionally, higher education institutions have primary learning outcomes and institutional learning outcomes listed on their websites, but few provide insight into what student leadership opportunities they have to offer. Beyond that, I haven't been able to find any university website that positions the MSA on their primary website alongside clubs with an academic focus. Once these students become young professionals, they lose a considerable number of the support systems that exist on a college campus such as spiritual mentors, a place to pray throughout the day, and in some instances, leadership training programs that consider

their own spiritual traditions. Companies must invest in leadership training opportunities that provide culturally appropriate training. Companies that focus on this audience can potentially maximize their results by implementing several of the key elements that kept them motivated throughout college. Areas of focus can include spaces for regular practice of spirituality like a meditation room but also provide spiritual focused mentorship and training that can support their leadership within a professional context.

Elements could include simple activities like the opportunity to learn leadership from resources that understand their spiritual tradition. An example of this could look like a leadership training on improving communication that examines stories from the life of the Prophet Mohammed as a case study. This allows not only an opportunity to improve communication in the workplace, it allows people from this background to find greater meaning in the training. Additionally, an area that could support these young professionals could be a mentorship program that connects senior Muslim corporate leaders that have a considerable amount of success in their careers to mentor these young professionals. This allows these young professionals to continuously grow with new role models and mentors. In their time in college, they often had a campus mentor that helped them with their personal growth as well as deal with the challenges that present themselves on a college campus. However, once these young students enter the workforce, they lose out on a guide to help direct them professionally and spiritually.

According to Priest & Clegorne (2015), high-impact practices on college campuses can enhance student leadership development. They highlight that students are searching for an accurate voice in the room to navigate complex challenges and issues that may arise. This is important because it sets the tone of what is relevant for students and how student organizations can respond to this dynamic. According to Priest & Clegorne (2015), it takes a level of

intentionality to build in the solution leadership programs that do not exist, and they argue that high-impact practices create an opportunity to create a context. Principles of experiential education can also apply to leadership education practices; these principles include intentionality, planning, authenticity, reflection, orientation, continuous improvement, evaluation, and acknowledgment (Priest & Clegorne, 2015). High impact practices and principles can serve as a framework for student groups to consider the leadership education aspect of their clubs and organizations and build the necessary elements to ensure the advancement of leaders.

Literature on How Role Models Develop Leaders

According to Mobeen et al. (2019), young American Muslims struggle with guidance due to a lack of role models and mentorship growing up in the United States. They highlight that young Muslims are subject to role confusion (Mobeen et al., 2019). I agree with the author that young Muslims struggle at a young age, and that is why the Muslim student experience is critical because those young Muslims with shared experience can connect at a Muslim Student Association (MSA). The MSA allows students to seek guidance from a mentor that has experience with dealing with students that have gone through a similar struggle. The college experience provides an opportunity to engage with Islamic values from a different lens.

According to Folarin (2012), the first step in developing a leadership program that mentors millennials is to understand their motivations and behaviors. Additionally, the researcher mentions millennials must be mentored in career-building activities to enhance their leadership (Folani, 2012). Role models are critical in the lives of leaders, and the most common role models that have an impact on people's lives are mentors at the workplace who provide direct counsel and advice and create the space for young leaders to grow. Role models in workplaces can negatively or positively influence millennials (Folarin, 2021). A good role model

can support the growth of millennials and train them to become leaders (Folarin, 2021). In the case of these participants, they struggle to find role models and mentors that can speak to their spiritual context. Role models that share a similar background are potentially more effective because they can understand the nuances that shape their experience.

According to Sanford Jr. (2021), role models are typically leaders themselves and have behaviors and characteristics that can be emulated or copied by followers. Additionally, the researcher highlights that role modeling is essential to leadership development (Sanford Jr., 2021). An understudied area has been the role of mentors in college particularly among Muslim students the study highlights how mentors on the college campus played a critical role in providing them with direction and feedback on their leadership. Literature supports the idea that mentors on a college campus are critical (Priest & Clegorne, 2015). However, in the case of the participants, their college mentors that have been particularly impactful in their lives have been the leaders that also have an organizational or professional background alongside spiritual background.

According to Murphy (2016), mentoring is complex, and people must have multiple role models. The researcher highlights that people should look everywhere for mentors. One approach is imitating leaders whom one admires (Murphy, 2016). Additionally, one should look at specific areas to focus on and emulate in those areas and get feedback throughout the process while continuously learning (Murphy, 2016). There's not enough literature available that speaks to this phenomenon amongst young Muslim millennials. In the case of this study, Maulana John oversees a network of spiritual mentors that serve dozens of universities in Southern California who not only provide advice on matters of spirituality but also professional career advice, family, and relationships, amongst other issues that impact the everyday Muslim millennial.

Another area of critical importance that is not studied enough is the role of exemplars from the past. In the case of those students who have taken the Prophet Mohammed as a guide in their lives although he's no longer alive, the stories from his life and his characteristics are extremely dear and near to their hearts and they find meaning in these prophetic stories that then shape their leadership. However, an underdeveloped area of study is how the life of the Prophet Mohammed shapes the leadership of Muslim organizational leaders across the board it's clear in this study that the Prophet Mohammed was it a recurring theme when it came to character development.

Implications for Practice: What the Industry Should Do to Encourage Role Models

Role models provide context to young leaders on building a life that incorporates spiritual purpose in their leadership roles. Participants identified a significant number of role models that played a role in shaping their leadership. Some participants were fortunate enough to have parents that were leaders, and this had an impact in their understanding of leadership, and often had a premonition that one day they too would be in a leadership role. They mentally prepared themselves to become a leader when the opportunity presented itself. However, alongside the parents, role models at the universities and in the workplace played a role in directing the energy and passion of these young individuals towards leadership opportunities. These mentors provided advice, guidance, and feedback on the best steps to take to grow as leaders.

The arena that is not studied enough is the topic of role models, particularly for the American Muslim community. Currently, the two primary role models have been Malcolm X and the Prophet Mohammed, who are extremely visible figures and well known. However, there is a considerable number of role models that young Muslim professionals can learn from, starting with successful Muslim corporate leaders who have been driven by their spirituality. One can

look at hundreds of influential organizational leaders that have abided by the Muslim principles of leadership and begin to develop stories and training that utilizes their leadership as case studies. Alongside the living or more recent Muslim corporate leaders there also are a considerable number of some leaders throughout history, ranging geographically from China to Turkey to India, who have led empires or were at the forefront of building institutions. Many of these leaders are forgotten amongst the participants in this study but reviving their legacy and their stories could perhaps invigorate and introduce new role models that could energize this group and drive them towards bigger and greater goals.

The participants' early role models helped get them motivated and introduced them into the world of leadership but perhaps studying a variety of role models could have taken them to greater heights and expanded their knowledge base. An example of such a leader could be someone like Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz, the eighth caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. He was known for his great leadership as well as his transformation into an expert in governance. Another great leader who could be studied is Nizam Ul-Mulk, who was known as one of the greatest administrators of the Ottoman Empire, amongst many others. These are some of the few of the thousands of potential Muslim leaders that could be relevant as role models to Muslim millennials. However, there is not yet enough literature to bridge the gap to make these leaders palatable to be studied as influential leaders who can play a role in shaping young leaders' philosophies. Principles and stories of humility, resilience, courage, and strategy, among many other relevant leadership principles, can be derived from these leaders' stories and can be made available for wider distribution through books, educational videos, and social media.

Literature on How Spiritual Practices Develop Leaders

Chapter 2 explained that spirituality can provide greater motivation for individuals who lead by tapping into their spiritual sides. Current literature on the role of faith and spirituality in leadership training is limited. Some researchers would advocate for spirituality in the workplace and make the case against incorporating religious practices at work in exchange for a secular workplace (Shreshta, 2017). However, the research study identifies how this lack of religious freedom has only created barriers and prevents people from truly practicing their best form of leadership of work that is rooted in their spiritual tradition.

There are companies and organizations that hire workplace chaplains. As highlighted by Waller (2012), these chaplains provide spiritual support to employees going through a difficult time. However, workplace chaplains are limited in their role and in what they provide employees. Their focus isn't on direct leadership development, and they don't particularly have the insight into the organizational and management training that is needed to train leaders. Perhaps a better approach would be for companies to hire a secondary role such as a leadership coach or trainer that understands the Islamic leadership principles to train this audience. Leaders like Maulana John are trained to provide spiritual support to young professionals but may not have the knowledge of organizational leadership to provide insight into critical areas of leadership practices and management skills that can help leaders grow.

Finally, there is an emerging trend called workplace spirituality where companies are beginning to understand the benefit of spirituality in the workplace. However, there is a push to separate religion from spirituality (NandanPrabhu & Rodrigues, 2016). This approach is detrimental to Muslim leaders because it devalues their faith and identity, it pushes people to not show up authentically and instead adapt to broad ideas of spirituality. Instead, a better approach,

suggested by Tobroni (2015), is to focus on the esoteric areas of Islamic leadership. Tobroni (2015) highlights these esoteric behaviors are beneficial but still focus on teaching from a culturally competent perspective where people connect to their own tradition and have their own spiritual lens. According to Toor (2008), the Islamic form of spirituality is available to anybody on a regular basis if they are able to tie it back to God's remembrance. Islamic spirituality is to seek God in the mundane task of everyday work. This radically differs from secular perspectives on workplace spirituality that emphasizes only values (Toor, 2008).

Implications for Practice: What the Industry or Places of Worship Should Do

Because spirituality is extremely broad, it covers a variety of different areas, but for these young individuals, it answers a central question which often goes unanswered, which is what the purpose of their existence is. Once they define what their purpose of existence is, and in this case, the purpose of being a practicing Muslim is to consistently remember God, then everything else falls into place. That is what the majority of these young participants find through MSA. The MSA helped define the reason for their existence. Although many of them might have been practicing at some point, there are some people who have been practicing their whole lives, and some who have found faith through MSA. The opportunity to take on a leadership role challenges them to put their faith into action, as seen in the stories of people like Salim, who, although throughout his life was involved in various leadership activities and his parents were also leaders, found a unique challenge in leadership on a college campus as a young adult. This experience also helps introduce leadership habits that can potentially stick with them through their professional careers, we see several examples of young leaders that begin to understand how to negotiate how to communicate build relationships and tie it back to their faith and the stories of Prophets.

Spiritual practices motivate by keeping leaders grounded throughout the day, from seeking God's assistance in decision-making to overcoming a stressful situation. Prayer has been the most significant spiritual act for most participants, who stressed how the physical act of prayer in the Islamic sense of prostrating kept them grounded and helped reorient their thoughts on what is critical for success. Verses from the Qur'an and Islamic teachings of the Prophet Mohammed also provided food for thought to participants when reflecting on the challenges they face on a regular basis; they were able to connect back to a spiritual anecdote that resonated with them.

The Qur'an is a spiritual text consisting of a variety of stories and ideas that guide people towards the remembrance of God. The life of the prophet Mohammed is seen as a living example of the Qur'an. Young leaders find solace in both the Qur'an and reading about the life of the Prophet Mohammed. One can draw inspiration and strength from his stories of perseverance, discipline, patience, focus, and drive towards building a spiritual community that not only consists of theological function, but also towards a daily life that includes business and commerce. The Prophet Mohammed's life is particularly of interest because he also was a merchant in his younger days and perhaps has a better understanding of the world of business, and what people go through on a regular basis.

However, we understand from the stories of participants like John and Rayyek, both of whom have been theologically trained and completed their degrees at a secular university alongside a theological university, a theological training is not enough to provide young leaders with an understanding of how to lead. John highlights the importance of mentorship to provide young professionals with leadership guidance, while Amr differs by describing that learning

from entrepreneurs and great business leaders of our time allows insights that can be supported by spirituality.

Implications for Future Research

Further research should consider the steps necessary to build a leadership program that incorporates spirituality that is relevant for organizational leaders. How can such a program incorporate not only stories from the life of the Prophet Mohammed, but also consider a considerable number of historical narratives and role models from remarkable stories from past Muslim caliphs? There are other insignificant leaders and significant leaders that could contribute to a body of literature that applies Islamic spirituality to the modern landscape.

Another relevant area is the role of companies in supporting spirituality within the workplace. How can businesses strategically identify mentors and role models that share the same spiritual tradition that can provide guidance to these young individuals? This process could be similar to the way Muslim college students had mentors on campus, who helped them with their personal development and spiritual goals while they were leading a student organization.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 describes millennials as the least motivated group of individuals. Alongside that, limited avenues exist to motivate these young people to attain leadership roles. Past approaches have utilized leadership training programs to train these young leaders. However, in recent years, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have sought to increase opportunities for people of different backgrounds. An area that is not studied enough is spiritual leadership. The literature around this concept is limited and fails to address the specifics of a Muslim demographic.

In a perfect world, there would be a leadership development program for young American Muslim leaders from high school that continues through their college and professional careers. Although the MSA has had success in shaping leaders in college, there is a training gap that exists prior to college and, more importantly, after college. Companies, in collaboration with these young leaders, should think about forming groups and associations that serve a young professional audience by providing the relevant training, mentors, and spiritual guidance that can help pave the way forward for these young leaders in their professional careers. Alongside that, leaders in the Muslim leadership space should be intentional about forming training that incorporates the best of modern leadership training and spiritual practices to create an approach that is relevant to emerging leaders.

In Figure 1 below, several key areas can be identified that contribute to the spiritual motivations of these young leaders. The three core areas are role models, the Muslim student experience, and spiritual practices. The leadership development experience primarily begins with one's parents as key role models. Eighteen of the participants referenced their parents as crucial role models in their lives and then emulated them because they saw their parents as leaders. Four of the participants did not bring up parents as role models, and two of them highlighted their parents as negative role models as a motivating factor. Malcolm X was the next role model that was consistently a theme due to his courage and authenticity as an American Muslim leader. The next role model, which was seen as the primary one in their lives, was the Prophet Mohammed. All of the participants, to an extent, highlighted a story from his life that taught them leadership, particularly in the areas of soft skills. Finally, the most interaction one had with a role model was a campus mentor. Whether a professor, chaplain, or local community leader, these mentors

served as intimate advisors that provided spiritual and professional guidance on making life decisions.

The Muslim student association experience was a theme in which participants had their first real taste of leadership, and they learned through trial and error what it takes to be a leader, whether organizing campus activities, collaborating with others, or understanding how to manage priorities. The Muslim student experience also provides purpose and a sense of direction and meaning in their life. Although it serves as a religious group, it also provides an opportunity to practice leadership, and this has the potential to plant seeds that lead to future leadership aspirations. Additionally, it is a place where one builds spiritual habits such as praying regularly, learning the Qur'an, and gleaned character refinement from the life of the Prophet Mohammed.

Finally, the third key area consists of spiritual practices which are the heart of the leader's experience. This begins when they are students and continues into their young professional careers, where they find themselves managing a busy schedule but building the discipline to take breaks and pray. These young leaders also are trying to find a balance to incorporate their values into the job, which include personal development, helping others, and engaging with the Qur'an to increase one's purpose and drive.

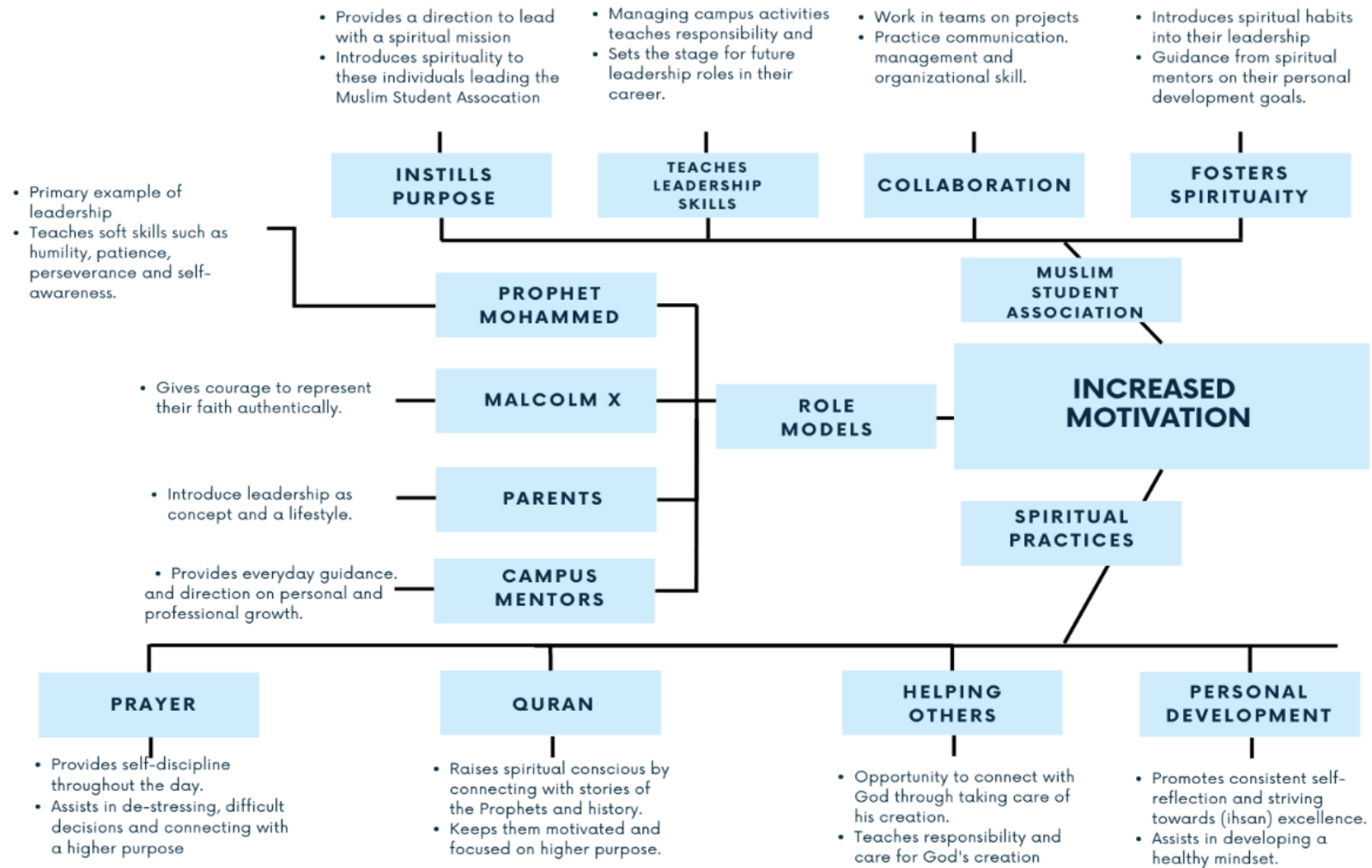


Figure 1: Factors that play a role in shaping the motivation of an influential Muslim organizational leader

In summary, millennial Muslim organizational leaders identified the role of spiritual practices, role models, and the Muslim student association as significant in shaping their leadership philosophies. Participants reflected on how their spirituality has helped them navigate challenges in their professional careers. In the future, researchers should consider how Muslim American millennials navigate their spirituality and professional careers. It would be interesting to see the effectiveness of corporate programs that try to bridge the gap between spirituality and motivation. As the world becomes an increasingly global village where people will have to interact with each other's cultures, it will be increasingly important to learn to navigate workplace spirituality and explore innovative approaches to build understanding and increase productivity.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Describe what has inspired your approach to leadership ?
2. Think about some individuals whether living or dead that have impacted you?
What are specific areas of their leadership that stand out?
3. Describe the role of spiritual practices in your leadership?
4. Think about particular sayings or verses from the Qur'an that resonate with you?
5. Describe how sufism helps you become a better leader?
6. How important is faith in your leadership?
7. If a workplace was to incorporate spirituality in their leadership trainings, what would that look like?