

Public Abstract

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Title: PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIORS THAT ENCOURAGE OR IMPEDE
ADVANCEMENT OR ATTAINMENT OF LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN HIGHER
EDUCATION BY MUSLIM WOMEN WEARING HIJAB

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that encouraged or impeded Muslim women wearing hijab from attaining or advancing in positions of leadership in higher education institutions in the United States. The researcher viewed the study through the lens of Critical Race Theory, which challenges traditional educational beliefs and practices. The overarching questions guiding this investigation centered on strategies Muslim women who wear hijab have used to overcome adversity and how institutions supported the aspirations of these women.

The study population consisted of two Muslim female leaders wearing hijab and working in higher education in the United States and these women's colleagues and administrators. The setting was a Midwestern college. Data collection methods included on-site campus observations, interviews, two focus groups, and an analysis of campus documents. Informal interviews were conducted with two Muslim educational leaders and two of their superiors, and focus groups were conducted with 12 of the leaders' colleagues at the college and assisted in supporting and triangulation of the data. The study findings articulated the importance of the role institutions of higher education played in creating environments that endorsed inclusion for recruiting, employing, supporting, and promoting aspiring Muslim female leaders; and the importance of relationships or connecting with The Other- between Muslims and non-Muslims in breaking down barriers and stereotypes of Muslim women to support recruit, employ, and promote aspiring Muslim female leaders. The results of this inquiry could impact both K-12 institutions and higher education institutions as they address the issue of engaging Muslim students, creating inclusive climates, and hiring Muslim staff, faculty, and administrators.