

**MUSLIM FEMALE TEACHERS ENACTING LEADERSHIP: A COLLABORATIVE
SELF-STUDY**

BY

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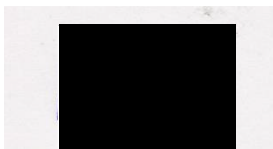
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DECLARATION

I, **Rashida BeBe Khan**, do hereby declare that:

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ABSTRACT

As a Muslim female teacher and Head of Department, I worked together with three other Muslim female teachers to explore the challenges of and opportunities for enacting leadership in personal and professional spheres. I considered leadership from multiple viewpoints, including an Islamic perspective and a feminist perspective. I also built on Grant's model (2012) of teacher leadership to understand Muslim female teachers' leadership in schools. Employing a collaborative self-study methodology, I used multiple data generation strategies: journal writing, memory drawing, collage making, story writing, letter writing and audio recorded discussions. The study was guided by two primary research questions: *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership?* I discovered that Muslim female teachers are capable of leading in personal and professional spheres. However, they often experience impediments related to patriarchy, religion, and culture. Muslim female teachers' voices are crucial in developing as leaders to express their views in decision-making, choices, and overcoming restrictions. Male and female family members, community members, and colleagues need to support Muslim female teachers' leadership. Complimenting, affirming and validating Muslim women's successes would strengthen female Muslim leadership and build Muslim communities. Religious and traditional Muslim values and practices should not be barriers to women's leadership development and access to opportunities. Men and women in power within school communities should understand that Muslim female teachers possess the competencies to lead. Openings and support should be created for Muslim female teachers to take on wide-ranging leadership roles beyond the school's confines. Overall, this study adds to essential methodological conversations about ethics in self-study research, particularly concerning collaborative self-study research on sensitive topics and with vulnerable participants. The thesis exemplifies how self-study researchers can take heed of the ethical significance of developing bonds, working with emotions, and using creative data generation practices. This study adds to the research literature, internationally and locally, on a particular group of vulnerable and marginalised women in teacher leadership, i.e., Muslim female teachers. To my knowledge, this is the first study in South Africa on Muslim female teachers' leadership.

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As this PhD thesis draws to an end, I would firstly like to thank *Allah* (God) for granting me the strength and insight to complete it. I thank my participants, whose contributions towards this study have been phenomenal. This thesis would never have reached its fruition without your valuable input. I thank you for making yourselves free to contribute towards data generation. Thank you Professor Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Professor Naicker for your continued support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMS	Association of Muslim Schools
DoE	Department of Education
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HoD	Head of Department
IEB	Independent Examination Board
PBUH	Peace be upon him – a phrase attached to the names of the Prophets
SANZAF	South African Zakah Fund
SGB	School Governing Body

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Allah	GOD
An-Nisa	Women
As Salaamu Alaikum	Peace be unto you
Baligh	Puberty
Bhai	Brother
Cha-cha	Father's brother
Duas	Acts of supplication
Eid ul Fitr	Religious holiday celebrated after a month-long fast
Fiqh	Islamic law
Gujarati	Person hailing from Gujarat who speak Gujarati
Hadith	A collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice
Halaal	Clean
Haraam	Forbidden
Hijab	Head covering worn in public by some Muslim women
Jamiat	A Muslim NGO body that helped with marriage counselling
Jilbab	A long, loose-fitting overcoat
Kala	Mother's sister
Kunchas	Gifts

Kurta	A loose collarless shirt worn in many regions of South Asia, and now also worn around the world
Ma	Mother
Mahram	A family member who a female cannot marry
Masi	Mother's sister
Madrassa	An Islamic afternoon school, where elements of the Quran were taught and learnt
Mahasabah	Self-reflection
Mehendi	Adorning the bride's hand with intricate henna designs
Memon	A Muslim person speaking the Memoni language
Moulana	Muslim priest
Nikaah	Religious ceremony of marriage for Muslims
Phuphi and Fois	Dad's sisters
Purdah	A manner of seclusion to avoid interaction with men
Quran	Holy book
Ramadan	The holy month of fasting from dawn to dusk
Revert	A person who was not a Muslim but has embraced Islam
Rotis	Indian flatbread
Sabak	Lesson
Salaah	Five prayer times per day
Salwar kameez	Indian pants suit and a head covering
Samosas	Triangular-shaped pastry filled with meat or vegetables
Shari'a	Commonly applied to the assumed body of Islamic religious law

Sunnah	Obligatory Islamic Rules
Suras	Chapters of the Quran
Surti	A person coming from Surat in India
Topee	Head covering for men, usually worn during prayer
Ummi	Mother
Urdu	Language related to Hindi
Wa alaikumus salaamu warah matullahi wabarakatu	And peace be upon you too
Zakaah	Charity
Zuhr salaah	Prayer after midday

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THIS COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how I, a Muslim female teacher and Head of Department, worked together with other Muslim female teachers to better understand the challenges and opportunities of enacting leadership in our personal and professional spheres. Enacting leadership is about leadership practice. It is about how leadership unfolds in particular contexts, and the moves and manoeuvres leaders make in their leadership performance (Naicker, 2014). I traversed past and present lived experiences in dialogue with three other Muslim female teachers to attain my purpose. This engagement enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of how we have engaged in leadership and understand the different perspectives, interests and needs of Muslim female teachers concerning leadership. I considered how a deeper understanding of these past and present experiences might contribute towards supporting Muslim female teachers as future leaders in personal and professional contexts.

In this chapter, I discuss the focus and purpose of this collaborative self-study research. I provide background information on the study, together with my rationale for such a study. I further work towards providing a clear understanding of my research questions and the key concepts that inform the research. I also describe the methodological approach. I conclude this chapter by giving an overview of the thesis, where each chapter is outlined in brief.

1.2 Background information

I am a Muslim female senior teacher. This self-study involved a collaborative exploration of the leadership experiences of four Muslim female teachers working in independent and public schools around the Durban area in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Feldman (2003, p. 35) points out that self-study researchers use various research methods, which are usually “qualitative, including collaboration and interaction” with colleagues. Hence, I used this collaborative self-study methodology to explore Muslim female teachers’ leadership within the personal and professional spheres.

In this study, I was a researcher and a participant, together with three other Muslim female teachers. At times I had to remind myself that I was both participant and researcher. I also asked myself several times during this collaborative self-study process which “hat I was wearing” (Masinga, 2013, p. 130). I had to transition from being a researcher to a participant during

discussions about our experiences. As a researcher, I had the responsibility of designing, managing and conducting research, as well as interpreting and synthesising scholarly literature and generating relevant data. I hoped to make valuable contributions towards supporting Muslim female teachers' leadership.

Because I was also a participant in the research, I took the advice of Ellis (2007) of taking extra precautions when writing sensitive stories about my parents and colleagues, ensuring that I did not offend or evoke emotional pain. As Ellis (2007, p. 17) cautions, "Often we operate under the fear of the unknown; we don't know how intimate others will react to what we write". This sometimes caused me to leave out specific, sensitive incidents.

I also did not know how my family members and colleagues would react upon reading this study, although many of the family members mentioned had passed away (Ellis, 2007). Ellis (2007, p. 26) advises, "As researchers, we long to do ethical research which makes a difference. To come close to these goals, we constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling". I understood that, as a researcher, I had to be careful about which questions I posed to myself and the other participants, ensuring that they were not invasive.

The biggest challenge in conducting this research was that I was also a research participant. In relaying my life experiences through story writing, I had to ensure that I remained anonymous so that my story would not be identified by the reader. Thus, I gave myself a pseudonym as a participant. By anonymising myself as a participant, I was cautious not to disclose private family matters that others might wish to keep confidential. The personal stories that I shared in the study are not identifiable as *my* stories.

My anonymity allowed me to say more when I was transcribing for my reflection and analysis than I would have otherwise been able to do. As a participant, my fear of my story being recognised in this study always plagued my thoughts. I was concerned about becoming the target of alienation by communities mentioned in this self-study. I also feared physical harm in conducting this study, which involved women, their experiences and their voices. Because I did not know who would be reading this research, I had to be guarded about what was revealed.

Ensuring the participants' anonymity was also an essential consideration. Mitchell, Magubane, Burkholder and Saloojee (2019, p. 186) point out that as feminist researchers, "we should protect women's lives and concerns in accounts of society, to minimize the harms of research, and to

support changes that will improve women's status". From this, I understood that as a feminist researcher, I had to protect the other female participants' lives, as we did not control what we divulged when we spoke from the heart and the head. I needed to protect the participants, as women belonging to our communities' vulnerable sector in South Africa. The participants' pseudonyms and anonymity are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Overall, it was vital to ensure that the identities of the participants were protected.

I needed the Muslim female participants to reveal their experiences and hoped that consciously remembering experiences would bring to light sometimes hidden and forgotten memories. This memory-work was an "act of deliberate remembering" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 45). As a result, I used a collaborative self-study methodology to recall our earliest childhood experiences as Muslim female children, together with our more recent experiences of leadership within our professional spheres. Moorosi (2011, p. 209), in her study of women principals in South African schools, points out that memory-work can be used as a "powerful tool in adding meaning to life stories". Hence, I hoped to make meaning of the experiences that surfaced from the participants' memories.

I used memory-work to get a better understanding of our experiences as Muslim female teachers. In her study on teachers as sexuality educators in South African schools, Masinga (2013, p. 121) acknowledges how her use of collective memory-work with her fellow teachers allowed for the emergence of "learning and reflection". Likewise, I hoped to gather information from the memory stories of leadership to better understand Muslim female teachers as current and future leaders. This unveiling of past experiences enabled me to work together with the other participants to retrieve and analyse past experiences. From this remembering of past experiences, I aimed to contribute new meanings and perspectives on Muslim female teachers' leadership.

1.3 My rationale for the study

I present the rationale for engaging in this study from four perspectives: personal, religious, professional and the identified silences in the literature.

1.3.1 Personal rationale

In looking at my past experiences as a Muslim female teacher and a head of department (HoD), I saw that as a Muslim woman, I did not always feel free to express myself within my home and my workplace (the school). I often felt intimidated by the people (men and women) around me.

I realised that developing greater self-esteem and encouraging freedom of expression as a Muslim female teacher is a sensitive but essential issue. This inability to express myself frustrated me and affected my self-esteem. I recognised that it stifled my progress, making me accept whatever was decided for me by family members and professional colleagues. I also referenced my professional experiences of many moments of frustration and challenges. Often, brilliant suggestions and ideas mentioned by female middle managers like myself were misconstrued as defiance or disrespect. As a result, I appreciated that Muslim female teachers' leadership was a particularly important issue to be researched. Moreover, from my engagement with other Muslim female teachers, it became clear through our conversations that many of them were not accorded the leadership opportunities they longed for within their professional spheres. Therefore, this study came into being, as I needed answers about Muslim female teachers' leadership.

Furthermore, I also realised that early memories of growing up within my Muslim household contributed significantly to the teacher I became. I became conscious that experiences within our personal spheres as Muslim female teachers were a particularly important issue to be researched. With this in mind, I embarked on this study where I aimed to get a better understanding of Muslim female teachers' leadership experiences within their personal and professional spheres.

1.3.2 Religious rationale

In my quest to understand Muslim female teachers' leadership experiences, I saw the importance of girls and women receiving an education. As a result, I began to read literature on Muslim girls and women and education, hoping to uncover what the Holy Scriptures and other literature point out about Muslim women's need to be educated. From this, I understood that "knowledge and learning are given great importance in Islam" (Stephenson, Harold, & Badri, 2018, p. 26). Therefore, I understood that education should play an essential role in Muslim girls' and women's lives. Muslims throughout the world consider the Quran (Muslim holy book) and hadith (collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, with accounts of his daily practice) to

be the base of all knowledge, and that “seeking and acquiring knowledge is a duty imposed by Allah” (Stephenson et al., 2018, p. 26). I grasped that the teachings of the Quran encouraged knowledge acquisition for Muslim men and women.

Furthermore, Lemu and Heeren (2000, p. 15) point out the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him [PBUH]) proclaims that “the search for knowledge is for every Muslim, male or female” and they should “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”. Therefore, I imagined that education is meant for all human beings. We (men and women) should take advantage of receiving an education from our early childhood, throughout our lives, up until our demise. Therefore, it is clear to me that Muslim women should be encouraged to pursue their studies in any field for their intellectual benefit and use this acquired knowledge in a manner that is beneficial to their personal and professional development as leaders. With this in mind, it is essential to mention a few prominent Muslim female leaders in Islamic history.

Many Muslim women in Islamic history were great leaders. Firstly, it is of utmost importance to speak about the most revered woman in Islam, Khadija (wife) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). She was an aristocratic, wealthy trader of Mecca who shared her wealth. She was very knowledgeable and instrumental in spreading Islam and was one of the first to accept Islam. She is regarded in Islamic history as the most excellent ambassador of Islam because of her exemplary nature.

Another great woman noteworthy to mention is Razia Sultan or Sultana Razia, as she was known. Razia was the daughter of the Sultan of Delhi (the capital of India). Ahmed (1990, p. 68) acknowledges that she ruled Hindustan (India) for 25 years and was trained by her father, who found his sons unsuitable to lead. Razia was Queen of Muslim India and was enlightened about the affairs of the kingdom. According to Ahmed (1990, p. 68) she was “brave, courageous and had expert horseman-ship”. She also took a keen interest in the welfare of the people of her country. However, her reign was cut short as she and her husband were mercilessly killed.

Another great woman of Islam was Princess Zaibun Nissa. Ahmed (1990, p. 207) made known that she was a “brilliant literary genius and also a poet”. She was able to recite the Quran proficiently. Famous scholars of that era were in charge of educating her, and she received instruction from her teachers in prose and poetry. She was also excellent in calligraphy and, from my perspective, was an ideal Muslim female who demonstrated her leadership capability in the

personal and professional spheres. She was a great role model for her family, friends, and community.

With these examples of extraordinary Muslim women in Islamic history, it is clear that there is a need for Muslim women to have access to education to make valuable contributions as leaders. This can bring changes for the improvement of the status of Muslim women within society. In my view, we need more Muslim women in our current era to emulate these exemplary Muslim women in Islamic history.

1.3.3 Professional rationale

As a teacher and as the HoD, I have observed a misconception in many Muslim and secular communities that Muslim women should not be educated. This occurs even though, as Syed (2000) asserts, education is the birthright of every Muslim and Muslimah (boy and girl). Also, those who are educated frequently seem to be discouraged or even prevented from taking on leadership roles and responsibilities within their professional domains. Literature reveals how assumptions, stereotypes, bias, gender prejudice and social constructs reinforce leadership inequality for Muslim girls and women. For example, Ahmad (2001), in her study on Muslim women and higher education in Britain, points out that Muslim women's entry into higher education was negatively affected by social factors such as patriarchy, culture and religion. Similarly, in my understanding, some people within our Muslim communities are negatively influenced by our religious and cultural practices and therefore underestimate Muslim women's capabilities. As a result, I embarked on a journey of conducting this self-study on Muslim female teachers' leadership.

1.3.4 Literature-based rationale

To my knowledge, from reading literature, there is a wealth of research on educational leadership. Further, there is a growing body of scholarship on teacher leadership. However, a silence that I noticed was that none of the literature I consulted seems to look specifically at Muslim female teachers' leadership.

Many studies have been conducted on the experiences of Muslim women and girls outside South Africa. To illustrate, Barakat (2018) researched Egyptian Muslim women and their professional experiences in a complex intercultural context. Barakat (2018, p. 37) explains how her "past experiences influenced her personal and professional learning and career choices". From this, I

understood that our background as Muslim girls and women has a significant impact on our personal and professional lives. Similarly, Ahmad (2001) conducted a study on Muslim female students' higher education experiences in the United Kingdom. This study focused on equal opportunities and graduate employability for Muslim female students. Ahmad (2001, p. 6) made known how “dominant stereotyped assumptions prevalent in both the literature and institutions, about the lives of Muslim women and their families” impact on the experiences of Muslim female students. Additionally, Rokhiyah (2015) conducted a study of her own life as an Indonesian Muslim woman. She reflected on her personal and professional life, hoping to learn by reflecting on her experiences. Similarly, I hoped to learn from the experiences of the participants.

1.4 Research questions

This collaborative self-study is guided by two research questions:

Question 1: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership?

This question is further broken down into two sub-questions, 1a) and 1b):

Sub question 1a): What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?

I wanted to learn about the participants' early years in their Muslim households, with their parents, siblings, extended family members and marriages. I needed to understand how they spent their time at home with immediate and extended family members and how people treated them within the private sphere. I wanted them to relate their experiences of receiving education and enacting leadership, both in school and in madrassa (religious institution). Lastly, I needed to know how they reacted towards patriarchy, family members, community members, their religion and culture, their need for education, and their ability to enact leadership. I needed to know their struggles and triumphs concerning leadership within the personal sphere and how each one of them dealt with this.

Sub-question 1b): What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?

I needed the Muslim female teacher participants to reveal their leadership experiences in school (their teaching context), within their classroom, outside the school, and their relationships with

colleagues from other schools. I sought to understand how these experiences impacted their ability to enact leadership. I also wanted them to relate their quest to re-professionalise themselves. I also needed to find out about their exposure to leadership opportunities within their professional communities and community members' reactions towards them enacting leadership.

Question 2: What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership?

My aim in this study was to find new possibilities for supporting Muslim female teachers' leadership. I needed to "spark new ideas" and consider options for enhancing Muslim female teachers' leadership (Samaras, 2011, p. 174). I wanted to learn from the experiences of Muslim female teachers. As Muslim female teachers, I needed to know how we could serve as role models for other Muslim women. Furthermore, I needed to understand how Muslim female teachers could educate our sons to accept women's empowerment and acknowledge Muslim women's ability to lead. I wanted to know how Muslim women could encourage other women to support women in leadership. I also needed to consider ways of dealing with challenges that emerged from our stories. I hoped to make valuable contributions to other research conducted with Muslim female teachers, especially other Muslim women who may have experienced similar issues.

1.5 Key concepts

In this section, I briefly explain the following key concepts: *leadership*, *women's leadership*, *Muslim women and leadership*, *distributed leadership* and *teacher leadership*. In Chapter Two, I present a more detailed description of these key concepts.

1.5.1 Leadership

In my view, leadership is about vision, motivation, and generating change for the better. Leadership encompasses "establishing a clear vision, sharing that vision with others so that they will follow willingly, providing the information, knowledge and methods to realise that vision" (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017, p. 36). As a researcher, I needed to explore how having a vision and working together for a common purpose was necessary within Muslim female teachers' personal and professional contexts. Grant (2009, p. 52) explains that "leadership is a process which works towards bringing a change in an organization". I thus view leadership as an activity that galvanises

people to transform the institution for the better. The institution could be a school, classroom or even the family unit. As Muslim female teachers, I wanted to know how we could enact leadership within our personal and professional contexts to bring about transformation.

1.5.2 Women's leadership

In this study, I look at a specific topology of leadership, namely, women's leadership. In my understanding of women's leadership, women often seem to enact a particular leadership style as they exhibit specific leadership styles. Women's leadership styles tend to be more flexible and inclusive than their corresponding male counterparts' typically more authoritative and supervisory styles (Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2011). Although some women have "broken the glass ceiling" in occupying leadership, female teachers still face challenges in enacting leadership in South African schools (Moorosi, 2010, p. 558). I needed to explore how women dealt with the difficulties of accessing and performing leadership and how they developed a particular leadership style.

1.5.3 Muslim women and leadership

In my understanding, Muslim women are capable of enacting leadership, given the opportunity. I also realised that Muslim women's leadership was influenced by Holy Scriptures, together with religion, culture and gender. Khalil and DeCuir (2018) point out that Muslim women's actions are often closely linked to the Quran and hadith, which accords females certain rights and privileges. I needed to understand these privileges and understand how Muslim women integrated the teachings of the Quran and hadith into their leadership practice. All in all, I sought to understand the impact of Muslim Holy Scriptures, cultural practices, and gender on Muslim women's leadership.

1.5.4 Distributed leadership

In my view, distributed leadership takes place across the organisation and includes non-formal leaders. Distributed leadership proceeds from the premise that "leadership is not the preserve of the individual at the top, but that it can be exercised by anybody within the organisation" (Frost & Harris, 2003, p. 480). This perspective is endorsed by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004, p. 27), who highlighted that "leadership needs to move beyond people who occupy formal positions", and should be stretched across everyone in the organisation giving rise to the leader-follower dichotomy as being fluid rather than fixed. In my view, this means that the practice of leadership

should not be limited only to the formally appointed leaders, such as school principals or departmental heads; instead, the practice of leadership may extend to informal leaders such as teachers, provided they have the capability to lead.

1.5.5 Teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is an expression of a distributed perspective of leadership. In my view, for school improvement to occur, “more teachers need to function as leaders” (Phelps, 2008, p. 119). This means that as teachers, we need to play an active role within our professional sphere. Teacher leadership also refers to teachers who lead within and outside their classroom and can identify with and influence other teachers to improve their teaching (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Teacher leadership further encourages teachers within a community of practice to achieve their vision of teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Harris and Lambert (2003, p. 3) highlight that teacher leadership is about “learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively”. Hence we need to work collaboratively as teacher leaders. Likewise, Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 229) point out that teacher leadership involves the “interaction of all participants working together on a shared vision” with teachers needing to work together towards achieving that vision. As a researcher, I understood that teacher leadership could manifest itself in different zones within and beyond the school. For example, teacher leadership can occur in the classroom, beyond the classroom but within the school, and beyond the school and in the community.

1.6 Self-study methodology

In my understanding, self-study is a deliberate process of looking at our personal and professional experiences within varied contexts. It relies on joint reflection into our experiences as a means to encourage new learning (Samaras, 2011). In this study, I needed to connect our experiences within personal and professional spheres and our leadership as Muslim women. LaBoskey (2004, p. 818) points out that self-study is “focused on the nexus between public and private, theory and practice, research and pedagogy, self and other”. From this, I understood that this self-study involved making a connection between ourselves and others and could occur both in our personal and shared spaces. Furthermore, this self-study is positioned within a qualitative approach because it draws on participants’ personal accounts and perspectives (Creswell, 2009). It seeks an in-depth understanding of Muslim female teachers’ lived experiences of leadership.

In this self-study, I explored Muslim female teachers' experiences with leadership within their personal and professional domains. LaBoskey (2004, p. 842) states that self-study is about “who is doing the research and who is being studied” and “studying our professional practice settings”. Hence, I conducted this self-study with the inputs of my participants and critical friends. In this study, my critical friends were four of my fellow doctoral students, Roxy, Yasmin, Timmy, Sally, and my supervisors. Ciuffetelli Parker (2006, p. 198) points out that self-study is “simultaneously to study the self-in-relation to the other”. I decided that this self-study would involve introspection into our experiences and practices as Muslim female teachers. I needed to dig deeper into our experiences within our personal and professional spheres so that new learning could emerge. I present a detailed account of this self-study research process in Chapter Three.

I chose to employ a self-study methodology to gain a deeper understanding of our experiences as Muslim female teachers and gain insight into the challenges and needs of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in their personal and professional domains. In what follows, I refer to the five foci methodological components of self-study research (Samaras, 2011) to better explain this self-study research process.

1.6.1 Five methodological components of self-study research

The five methodological features are personal situated inquiry, critical collaborative inquiry, improved learning, transparent and systematic research, and knowledge generation and presentation.

Personal situated inquiry. In exploring the participants' personal experiences and myself concerning leadership, I engaged in this self-study research. This self-study methodology allowed the participants and me to share and look closely at our experiences within our personal and professional lives. We described our experiences through story writing, discussions, and group meetings. We delved into our personal and professional experiences as Muslim female teachers, thus developing “personal and professional relationships” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 9). The self-study process made us participants comfortable with each other, which was an essential feature of this study. Sowa (2016, p. 81) highlighted that self-study “best describes one's experiences”. Exploring our experiences of enacting leadership was integral to my study.

I envisaged that this self- study would enable me to understand better how we have engaged and are engaging in leadership. From this study, I aimed to get a clearer understanding of Muslim female teachers' different perspectives, interests, and needs concerning leadership. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 58) support this notion in pointing out that self-study research focuses “deeply on the self and the relationships between the self and practice”. Thus I understood that I would need to “openly ask questions about our teaching experiences” (Samaras, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 100) emphasise that although self-study research is “self-initiated and focused, it requires collaboration with others in practice”. In my understanding, it involves working together with others, hence my collaboration with my participants and critical friends.

Critical collaborative inquiry. Self-study methodology involves interaction with others (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). Collaboration helps us to “take risks, make changes, feel safe, and get honest feedback to grow” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 7). I consequently aimed to use these features of collaboration to understand our experiences as Muslim female teachers. Similarly, Masinga (2013, p. 20) explains how she used collaborative inquiry to “bring together a group of individuals who experienced a similar problem to collaboratively work together, to get a better understanding of that problem”.

I brought together a group of four Muslim female teachers who worked in different school contexts to gain insight into their experiences. This engagement with my research participants enabled me to engage in in-depth discussions about our personal and professional experiences. I anticipated that the participants and I might experience some similar problems within our personal and professional spheres. Therefore, I aimed for us to work collaboratively to understand these problems through reflection and introspection. Taylor and Coia (2014, p. 12) highlight that “collaborators or critical friends help to see beyond the individual or personal worldview and reframe teaching practice”. Consequently, I envisaged that my critical friends and participants (together with myself) would contribute significantly to this study by giving their feedback.

As this self-study aimed to understand Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership within the personal and professional spheres, I sought to understand our experiences as South African Muslim women from our early childhood, through schooling and tertiary education, and eventually our professional work experiences. I needed to understand the impact of these experiences within the personal domain and their possible professional consequences for the

female teachers we became. Samaras (2011, p. 10) points out that self-study examines your “lived practice”, in this case, our experiences as Muslim female teachers’ within our professional spheres. In my view, this entailed getting a deeper understanding of our experiences within these spheres. Samaras (2011) made known that engaging in self-study involved an interweaving of personal reflections and action. I therefore, explored my own experiences of enacting leadership within the personal and professional spheres, together with those of the other three Muslim female teacher participants.

Improved learning. Understanding Muslim female teachers’ experiences and being able to learn from these was essential to this self-study. Hamdan (2012), in her study on the lives of Muslim women in Canada, made known how our personal experiences can be used to educate ourselves and others. Self-study research could also be used to gain a deeper understanding of one’s practice as a teacher, reflect on this practice, and provide different opinions of our teaching and learning (Samaras, 2011). I anticipated that I would better understand our experiences as Muslim female teachers through introspection and ultimately find answers to my research questions.

In this self-study, I sought to gather and analyse the data ethically to use the findings to enhance Muslim female teachers’ experiences of enacting leadership. Self-study is “improvement aimed, interactive, uses multiple qualitative methods and is a trustworthy and valid process” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 817). From this, I understood that I would have to ensure that this self-study was conducted ethically. Likewise, Samaras (2011, p.11) points out that self- study “involves critical inquiry”. I anticipated that exploring the experiences of Muslim female teachers would improve our understanding of why things went wrong, as well as how we were exposed to and given opportunities to enact leadership. This might improve our learning and make a positive impact on the lives of other Muslim female teachers wanting to embrace leadership. This self-study helped me gain insight into past experiences, opportunities for remediating the past errors, and providing possibilities for the future.

A transparent and systematic research process. As I aimed to contribute to further learning on Muslim women’s leadership, I ensured trustworthiness and validity through means reflected on in Chapter Three, together with the process of collecting data, analysing the information and capturing the findings. To study our experiences, I needed to look closely at our lives and practices as Muslim female teachers and the impact of these experiences on others and the outside world.

Hence I embarked on using a self-study methodology as a transparent and systematic mechanism to generate data through a collaborative process in conjunction with the participants. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, in using this methodology I aimed to be “open and honest” by asking questions that were “clear” (Samaras, 2011, p. 11). Questions I asked during discussions with participants included, for example, “What were some hidden memories that re-surfaced and how did you handle this?”, “Express your emotions about some leadership experiences, why you felt the way you did, and how you managed these emotions?”. I anticipated that collaborative self-study could allow us as a collective to learn from each other through conversation (Samaras, 2011). The transparency of this study was enhanced by getting the inputs of my critical friends, who provided alternative views and interpretations of our experiences as Muslim women (Samaras, 2011).

In this study, I needed to be prepared to ‘ruffle some feathers’ and examine Muslim female teachers’ experiences as a means of finding answers to my research questions, therefore asking uncomfortable questions when the need arose. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 10) point out that self-study aims to “provoke, challenge and illuminate rather than confirm and settle”. I realised that I would need to engage in robust discussions to get a better understanding of our leadership experiences as Muslim female teachers.

Knowledge generation and presentation. My ultimate aim in this self-study research was to bring to the fore possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers’ leadership. Therefore, I aimed to develop a deeper understanding of why we had particular experiences of leadership as Muslim female teachers. According to Samaras (2011, p.11), self-study “contributes broadly to the knowledge base of personal, professional, and school development”. I hoped that this self-study research would generate new knowledge that would be beneficial in enhancing the leadership of Muslim female teachers and identifying ways to support Muslim women as teacher leaders. Through this self-study, I hoped to find purposeful strategies for supporting Muslim female teachers’ leadership within the personal and professional spheres. Through weighty introspection into our past and present experiences of leadership and meetings with my critical friends, I endeavoured to contribute valuable knowledge about Muslim female teachers’ leadership

1.6.2 A collaborative self-study

In this study, I chose a collaborative self-study approach to better understand Muslim female teachers' leadership. I realised that there would be group meetings with participants and myself where we discussed our past and present experiences of enacting leadership. According to Samaras (2011), collaborative self-study can be used by an individual or a team who can interactively examine an issue. Collaborative self-study can also be called a "team-based approach", where participants explore their "collective wisdom" (Samaras, 2011, p. 99). This collaborative self-study also entailed cooperation and analytical conversations with peers as critical friends who offered "various viewpoints" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 825).

This self-study was an "interactive examination of an issue" (Samaras, 2011, p. 280). As a result, I worked towards getting the participants to share their experiences and views concerning leadership within the personal and professional spheres. All the participants contributed significantly by sharing their stories, which are represented in Chapters Four and Five. This collaboration allowed for "various voices and writing and sharing stories" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 835). The self-study was reliant on collaboration as each one of us participants relived our experiences through our stories, our images, our collage and our journal entries. The value of re-examining our experiences is supported by Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004). They point out that self-study research enables us to revisit and reimagine our professional selves, look back, and imagine how things could be different in the future.

Furthermore, Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 83) also consider self-study as a "process of ongoing discovery". Hence, I understood the need for continued engagement with the participants, hoping to make valuable discoveries throughout our reflections and collaborations. Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009, p. 37) assert that self-study is a means of examining one's "personal experience in a social context", which in this instance is in the contexts of our personal and professional spheres.

I engaged in collaboration with my participants and critical friends to benefit from the inputs made by them (Samaras, 2011). I anticipated that this collaboration would enable me to listen without being judgemental. Input from my critical friends and participants was crucial, as "a commitment to outside interpretations and a willingness to review one's existing frames" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 49). Using a collaborative self-study approach enabled me to openly discuss things that I was unsure of regarding the data generation process with my critical friends (Samaras, 2011).

Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 58) assert that collaboration also helps us to “move beyond our personal views by hearing other perspectives”. Hence, I needed to listen to others’ views. As Samaras (2011, p. 223) states: “Collaboration contributes to the validation of findings, because the analysis extends beyond one’s personal views, thus addressing potential biases”. I aimed to use my collaborators’ inputs to add to my understanding of this study’s findings and contribute to the validity of the research.

1.7 Conclusion and overview of the study

In Chapter One, I explained how this collaborative self-study came into being. I clarified my personal and professional motivation for this study and how I worked as the researcher and as a research participant, along with three other Muslim female teachers who shared some similar experiences concerning leadership. I outlined the research questions and briefly introduced the key concepts underpinning the study. Next, I clarified the main features of the methodological approach. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the thesis.

In Chapter Two, I discuss conceptions and contestations of leadership and some typologies and frameworks of leadership. I engage with scholarly literature that provides multiple perspectives on Muslim women and leadership. I discuss the term ‘leadership’ and the concepts related to leadership, such as leadership and change, collaboration and vision, influence and ethics. I clarify the relationship between leadership and management. I further explain the metatheoretical positioning of leadership as well as leadership from an Islamic perspective, and women and leadership, together with feminism and its impact on women’s leadership. I consider women in leadership and the challenges they encounter daily. I also deliberate on the effects of religion, culture, community expectations and influence, and explain how women deal with daily challenges as leaders. In the last section, I explain distributed leadership and its purpose towards bringing about a change in teaching and learning. Finally, I end by discussing teacher leadership and explaining Grant’s model (2012) of teacher leadership and my purpose for using this model.

In Chapter Three, I focus on the research process. I describe the research participants, the need for their anonymity, and the pseudonyms given to each one of them. I further explain the participants’ varied teaching contexts and our meetings. I also describe my critical friends and their

contributions to this study. I highlight the data generation strategies of journal writing, memory drawing, collage creation, story writing and letter writing. I elaborate on the audio recording of conversations. I then discuss data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical issues. I also demonstrate the need for support and sensitivity during this study. Chapter Three concludes by describing how I dealt with the problems I experienced and how I managed my own emotions and frustrations as a researcher and participant.

In Chapter Four, I begin to answer the first research question: *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership?* In responding to this question, I present the narratives of Curly Sue and Awesome Annie, who taught in public schools. Their lives began in the 1960s and underwent dramatic some changes. I retell their stories of growing up in a Muslim family, attending school, madrassa, receiving tertiary education and their present-day career as Muslim female teachers. Their stories reflect their lived experiences together with their leadership struggles and triumphs. I conclude this chapter with letters written by the participants to their future selves and share their messages to future Muslim female teachers.

In Chapter Five, I continue to answer the first research question: *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership?* I recount the narratives of Aneesha and Countessa, both teaching in an independent school context. Aneesha's life began in the 1960s and Countessa's life in the 1980s. Due to the age difference between Aneesha and Countessa, their stories differ in many ways. Through these stories, Aneesha and Countessa express their patriarchal experiences, living in a gendered society, empowerment, and emancipation. I also describe their challenges and victories in enacting leadership in their personal and professional spheres. Once again, the chapter ends with letters written by the participants to their future selves.

Chapter Six continues to answer my first research question, focusing on sub-question 1a): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?* I re-examine the stories of the Muslim female teacher participants' life experiences of leadership in the personal sphere. I draw on relevant literature to understand these experiences, rooted in the roles of daughter, mother, student, teacher, and wife. I discuss the participants' leadership experiences in the home and reveal how tensions and restrictions feature strongly within their personal stories.

Chapter Seven continues to answer my first research, sub-question *1b*): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?* I unpack our stories of leadership as teachers. I consider our teaching contexts, leadership within the classroom, leadership in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, leadership beyond the classroom but within the school, and leadership beyond the school and into the community. I explore how leadership in the professional sphere began in classrooms and sometimes transitioned outside the school and into the community. I also illustrate how different school contexts required us as Muslim female teachers to revise and reinvent certain curriculum aspects to bring about the best for the learners, colleagues, parents, and others associated with our professional contexts.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter. In this chapter, I review the collaborative self-study and the lessons learnt. I also respond to the second research question: *What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership?* I bring to light my learnings about Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in the personal and professional spheres. Furthermore, I present my understandings about Muslim female teachers' possibilities for enacting leadership within personal and professional contexts. I further highlight the methodological, contextual and theoretical contributions of this self-study.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I explained how this study came into being. I described my personal and professional motivation for this study and how I worked as the researcher and a research participant, together with three other Muslim female teachers. I outlined the research questions and explained the methodological approach.

From being a young Muslim woman to my present position as a mature mother, wife, academic, and HoD, I have often questioned my leadership ability. I have noticed how Muslim women's leadership is often limited or hindered. Understanding the term 'leadership' became important in comprehending Muslim women's leadership within our homes, communities, and professional domains.

In this chapter, I discuss conceptions of leadership and some typologies and frameworks of leadership. I aim to give a clearer understanding of the contestations about leadership. I first engage with the term leadership and unpack critical concepts related to it, such as leadership and change, collaboration and vision, influence and ethics. I then explain the relationship between leadership and management. I also discuss context responsive leadership. I further illuminate the metatheoretical positioning of leadership. Additionally, I consider leadership from an Islamic perspective to correlate the Holy Scriptures and teaching and leading, paying careful attention to the role of women as leaders.

In the next section, I discuss women and leadership, together with feminism and its impact on women's leadership. I also consider women in leadership and the challenges they encounter. I discuss the effects of religion, culture, community expectations and influence, and explain how women deal with daily problems as leaders. I further elaborate on women and leadership by explaining Muslim women's leadership, aiming to explain how religion and tradition impact their leadership capabilities. I also comment on the views of first and second-generation Muslim parents on educating girls.

In the last section, I explain distributed leadership and its purpose towards bringing about a change in teaching and learning. I also discuss the need for collaboration, change and vision in this section.

Finally, I consider teacher leadership and Grant's model (2012) of teacher leadership and my purpose for using this model. I end this chapter by highlighting some useful discoveries made during my engagement with the literature.

2.2 Leadership

Leadership is a multifaceted concept and is forever evolving. Much of it is unseen and untouchable (Bell, 2006). To understand leadership, I needed to understand what constitutes leadership as I began to realise that context, personal goals and life experiences impacted heavily on leadership. In the following section, I refer to the core elements of leadership, as identified by Grant (2009): leadership and change, collaboration and vision, and influence and ethics.

2.2.1 Leadership and change

Leadership is about generating growth. According to Grant (2009, p. 52), leadership is a process that works towards "bringing a change in an organization". An organisation could refer to a company, firm, institution, league, society, club, school and other such agencies within our personal and professional lives. For example, "teacher leaders work towards movement and change in their classrooms and schools" (Grant, 2009, p. 53). In essence, this would mean encouraging the school to move forward in teaching and learning. I needed to explore our leadership practices as Muslim women within our homes, classrooms, schools, workplaces and the community and how these impact our capacity to bring about change while engaging in teaching and learning. I needed to discover our abilities as Muslim female teachers in acting as "change agents" (Grant, 2009, p. 54). Change and transformation are also reliant on the identity of teachers as leaders. I anticipated that these identity factors would have impacted our lives as South African Muslim female teachers. Therefore, I embarked on a journey to find out how our identities as Muslim female teachers impacted our leadership. This brings me to the discussion of another critical component of leadership, which is collaboration and vision.

2.2.2 Collaboration and vision

In my understanding, having a vision and working collaboratively are linked. I understand that leadership encompasses "establishing a clear vision, sharing that vision with others so that they will follow willingly, providing the information, knowledge and methods to realize that vision" (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017, p. 356). This entails encouraging others to work together towards the

realisation of a common purpose and not focusing solely on one's own desires and wants. Similarly, Muijs and Harris (2007) argue that teachers must make decisions and achieve their purpose through collaboration. Collaboration includes teachers working together towards a common goal. Therefore, I conclude that leadership encompasses working together in a group with other professionals who regularly come together for meetings and discussions, during which there should be a high level of collaboration and collegiality. From my understanding, having a vision as a leader was another quality of our leadership as Muslim female teachers that needed to be explored further. In my view, having a vision and putting that into practice involves cooperation so that our personal and professional goals can be met, together with those of the institution. This is linked to influence and ethics.

2.2.3 Influence and ethics

Effective leadership is about influence and ethics within our interactions. Coming from a Muslim background, we are influenced by the teachings of the Quran (Islamic sacred book containing the words of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, the messenger of God), hadith (a collection of traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and *Sunnah* (a way of life for Muslims emulating the daily example of living of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). Growing up with these values and the influence of Islamic teachings and lifestyles is deeply embedded in the lives of Muslim men and women. These form the foundation of significant decisions in our personal and professional lives. As far as I understand the importance of seeking knowledge as a Muslim, it is crucial to refer to the Quran and hadith as they “are considered to be the foundation of all knowledge and seeking and acquiring knowledge is a duty imposed by Allah” (Stephenson et al., 2018, p. 25). This implies that Allah (God) encourages all beings to acquire knowledge from the Quran's teachings. Thus in Islam, “educational leaders are seen as role models, teachers and mentors who should be constant seekers and givers of knowledge” (Stephenson et al., 2018, p. 25). Therefore, I understand that Muslim leaders should continuously seek knowledge and embody the qualities of sharing this knowledge with others around them. I also realised that the Quran emphasises that our understanding should be used ethically to influence the people we interact with, which brings me to a closely associated theme with influence and ethics and involves human rights and equality: the relationship between leadership and management.

2.3 The relationship between leadership and management

Closely related to the term 'leadership' is 'management'. Leadership and management are two sides of the same coin. They "need to work in tandem" to be effective (Grant, 2009, p. 52). Grant (2009, p. 46) argues that both leadership and management are needed for schools to "prosper"; however, schools tend to have an "overemphasis on management at the expense of real leadership" (Grant, 2009, p. 55). According to Naicker, Pillay and Grant (2016), management involves designing, arranging, administering, and bringing together and maintaining the organisation's existing situation. Leadership involves working towards a goal, having the vision to reach that goal, and being very people orientated (Grant, 2009). Management is viewed as "the task of a few, and not the responsibility of all the members of an educational organization". At the same time, leadership is seen as the "action of a group of people at different levels in school and is focused at improving learning" (Grant, 2009, p. 511). From this, I understand that leadership and management go hand in hand; they coexist and are necessary for schools to function effectively. For example, when leaders are involved in performing leadership, such as vision setting or follower motivation, they may simultaneously engage in management. The converse is also true, that when managers plan, organise, control, and coordinate activities, they may also display leadership characteristics.

2.4 Metatheoretical positioning of leadership

In understanding leadership, it is essential to understand the four main metatheoretical positionings of leadership, namely the "scientific, humanistic, instrumental and critical" (Gunter, 2001, p. 91). According to Gunter (2001, p. 95), the scientific position aims to "measure the casual impact [for example] headteachers as leaders on follower behaviours, functions and emotions and on student learning outcomes". In my understanding, this can involve the use of statistics to measure student performance.

The humanistic position focuses on the narrative where, for example, the headteachers can reflect on their experiences in their specific context and time (Gunter, 2001). Within these stories, headteachers can speak about successes and challenges and how they dealt with these (Gunter, 2001). This approach deals with real-life experience. In my view, in talking about real-life experiences, we can find new ways to deal with existing issues, creating a platform for new remedies for old ailments.

Aiming to achieve organisational outcomes is essential in leadership. The instrumental position provides leaders with "effective leadership strategies to deliver organizational outcomes" (Gunter,

2001, p. 95). This position focuses on understanding leaders' behaviours and their leadership practice, and how they deal with encounters.

The critical position plans and analyses the interactions between the “agency of the role incumbent and the structures that enhance or limit that agency” (Gunter, 2001, p. 96). This position allows leaders to reflect on what “they do and are told to do, linking their work and the bigger picture outside of the immediacy of action” (Gunter, 2001, p. 96). This approach focuses on power and aims to “reveal and emancipate leaders and followers from social injustice and the oppression of established power structures” (Gunter, 2001, p. 96). This position is concerned with reflection, action and seeing the bigger picture and alternatives to existing ways of working.

In exploring the four prominent metatheoretical positions, I realised that I would be taking a combination of three positions. First is the humanistic position, as it deals with real-life experiences and how we deal with challenges. Second, the instrumental position, as I aimed to engage in reflection on past experiences and seek alternatives. Third, the critical position, as I to overcome barriers of oppression and social barriers. In taking these three metatheoretical positions, I hope to gain a clear understanding of Muslim women's leadership.

2.5 Context-responsive leadership

From my engagement with literature, I grasped that leadership in our South African school contexts is integral to our practice as Muslim female teachers. Leadership cannot be isolated from the context in which we work as teachers. Shah (2006, p. 363) reinforces this view by claiming that leadership is dependent upon context, culture and societies and that “leadership as a concept is formulated in context”. I needed to understand how our unique personal and professional contextual experiences impacted our leadership as Muslim female teachers.

Bredeson, Klar and Johansson (2011, p. 2) highlight in their study of “context responsive leadership” that “leadership is both embedded in and influenced by context”. From this, I understood the need for some leaders to align their leadership practice to suit the context in which they find themselves. Context-responsive leadership is continually changing as it meets the demands of the context in which leaders work (Bredeson et al., 2011). Leadership is, therefore, dependent on setting size, culture, community characteristics and location. This encouraged me to

dig deeper into our experiences as Muslim female teachers to reveal the impact of our varied contexts on our leadership.

Differences in contexts, such as teacher-pupil ratio, location, size and catchment area of schools certainly influence leadership daily. Smaller settings tend to have direct oversight, while broader contexts rely on leadership through others (Bredeson et al., 2011). In my opinion, transitioning from large to small schools, well-resourced to less-resourced schools, elite to mainstream and public to independent schools, would undoubtedly impact on leadership. Furthermore, Bredeson et al. (2011, p. 12) highlight that “communication styles also impacted on leadership within the size of contexts”. In my view, effective communication is influenced by context size, as information is disseminated quickly in smaller contexts. In contrast, in larger contexts, other communication channels, such as social media platforms, can relay messages. I needed to probe how differences in contexts and communication styles impacted our journey in enacting leadership.

As Muslim female teachers, our lives are informed by our culture, and this influence cannot be ignored. Bredeson et al. (2011, p. 12) point out that the “culture (history, norms, traditions and symbols)” of contexts also determined leadership styles, as leaders have to adapt to the culture of their specific contexts. I needed to understand how our cultural practices, the language we speak, caste, and class might have influenced our leadership as Muslim female teachers. Similarly, Grant (2009, p. 51) highlights that leadership varies and is dependent on the “historical, cultural and institutional settings in which it is situated” and that “leadership cannot be withdrawn from its socio cultural context”. The organisational culture of context influences leaders’ work as they have to adapt their leadership styles to suit their varied contexts. This adaptation requires forbearance and sensitivity. Furthermore, it can be said that “different cultures, societies and communities construe leadership in different ways” (Shah, 2006, p. 366). This led me to explore how our culture within our different geographical contexts might have impacted our personal and professional lives and leadership.

The “characteristics of the community and the geographical location of contexts” also influence leadership styles (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 15). In my view, varied contexts such as urban, rural, suburban, and small-town require different leadership interventions. Besides, as Bredeson et al. (2011) point out, the structure of geographical location forces leaders to identify problems in these

contexts and work around them, identifying that contexts may enable or constrain leadership. I needed to explore these enablers and constraints on leadership. According to Bredeson et al. (2011, p. 20), context-responsive leaders know “when, where, why, and how to push back or reshape elements of context in order to provide a more favourable environment for achieving priorities and goals”. From this, I understood that leaders influence their contexts to achieve their desired vision. Context-responsive leaders “react to and reshape their contexts of practice” (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 21). Thus I understand the need to re-organise and reconstruct our context, as the geographical location impacted our leadership. In my view, context-responsive leadership is about working collaboratively with role players to reshape the context by catering to that specific context’s needs.

Financial management has always been an essential issue for any individual, leader, or not. I needed to understand how finances impacted our leadership within our personal and professional spaces. Shah (2006) supports this by pointing out that leadership is also dependent on contexts’ economics. Leaders in the private and professional spheres often take responsibility for financial management within their contexts. Bredeson et al. (2011, p. 16) make known that “superintendents needed to be careful stewards of resources and the manner in which they monitored fiscal situations, funding of activities and involvement in raising funds”. This enactment involves working closely with others within their private and professional spaces. Bredeson et al. (2011) point out that managing finances also requires leaders to be trustworthy and visionary, ensuring that diverse contexts’ financial needs are met. In my view, financial leadership is also heavily reliant on the building of trust, especially in managing finances. As Muslim female teacher participants, we all belonged to different contexts. I needed to get a deeper understanding of how dealing with finances and being trustworthy might have impacted our leadership.

Finances are linked to the political composition of communities, and politics have a profound impact on leadership. Bredeson et al. (2011, p. 17) argue that the political influence of contexts affect leadership as leaders always have to “navigate and shape” the political climates in which the school is led. As South Africa undergoes a continuous change of political leadership, each leader enforces their vision of our country, bringing changes that impact teaching and learning. It is clear that the elements of politics, location, finances, size, and culture do not exist in isolation, and that individually and collectively, they qualify leadership, hence the term “context-responsive leadership” (Bredeson et al., 2011). Context-responsive leadership is, to no small extent, shaped

by the way leaders behave and interact within their contexts—our actions as Muslim female teachers enacting leadership within these contexts needed to be explored.

From this, I understand that our varied contexts, each with its own teacher-pupil ratio, geographical location, infrastructure, culture, religious practices, financial status and political influence, would affect our leadership practices as Muslim female teachers. I needed to reveal these.

2.6 Leadership: An Islamic perspective

My quest began in reading literature on leadership and especially leadership from an Islamic perspective. I needed to understand what leadership in Islam meant to develop a deeper understanding of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. The *ulema or mulla* (religious, educated scholars) lead madrassas (religious institutions). These ulema have helped maintain the notion of educational leaders as “spiritual, moral and academic mentors” (Shah, 2006, p. 372), which suggests that these ulema are highly educated. The ulema who head the madrassas are accorded a high status in society. The majority of Muslim men and women are trained by these religious leaders in some way within our personal and professional lives. These ulema provide young Muslims boys and girls with “spiritual, moral and academic” knowledge (Shah, 2006, p. 372). In my understanding, they provide knowledge of the Quran and *Sunnah* (practices of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH)), which form the foundations for worldly and spiritual wisdom. From this, I understand that the qualities of ethical conduct, dietary issues of eating halaal (clean) only and practising the habits of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are compulsory for every Muslim boy and girl. There are no financial obligations attached to receiving the teaching of *Deen* (Islamic knowledge). I came to understand that these religious scholars would have impacted our leadership as Muslim female teachers. I needed to explore how our madrassas and the ulema influenced or shaped how we practised leadership.

For all Muslims, the Quran is the ultimate resource, where guidance towards knowledge acquisition and good leadership practice is encouraged. Shah (2006, p. 368) emphasises that the Quran is the basis for Muslim leadership and that seeking knowledge has a “collective dimension (to share that knowledge with others), *haqook-al-abaad* (obligations of human beings to one another)”, therefore showing responsibility towards other human beings by imparting knowledge. Furthermore, the Quran highlights that ethics, morals, values, self-discipline and character building are essential for leadership and promotes “diversity and equality” (Shah, 2006, p. 376) within our

society. This indicates that the teachings of the Quran encourage the equal treatment of people irrespective of their race, religion, physical attributes, status or wealth (Quran, Surat al-Hujurat 49:13). As I understand, the Quran (Surat al-Hujurat 49:13) points out the following:

“And we set you up as nations and tribes so that you may be able to recognize each other”

This implies that national, racial and tribal divisions are not intended for strife, contempt, usurping rights, and subjugation, but for identification and cooperation. Islam established equality for the entire human race and struck at the very root of all distinctions based on colour, race, language or nationality.

With this in mind, I aimed to inquire into how we as Muslim female teachers used the knowledge (ethics and morals) from the Quran and applied it to our leadership practice within our personal and professional lives. From an Islamic perspective, leading has strong connotations of leading through values, morals and ethics (Shah, 2006). This notion of leadership implies that the nature of our actions and disposition towards others as Islamic leaders are essential. With the impact of ethics and the influence of our culture, religion and our varied contexts, the search for answers as Muslim women enacting leadership became more necessary. In my opinion, the Quran’s teachings encourage ethically and morally correct leadership and knowledge acquisition practices.

Interpretation of religious texts is vital in understanding leadership as Muslims. Shah (2006, p. 366) highlights that “educational leadership in Islam is derived from Islamic philosophy of education involving the interpretations informed by an understanding of religious texts”. Understanding the words referred to in these texts served as a medium in acquiring a more lucid understanding of the purpose and need for knowledge and leadership. I needed to know how we, as Muslim female teachers could use this knowledge gained from religious texts and apply it in leadership opportunities. According to Shah (2006, p. 367), Islamic educational leadership is based on “knowledge building which is derived by the teachings of the Quran and Hadith”, which should be further explored.

Understanding the relationship between knowledge and leadership is integral in understanding Islamic leadership. Shah (2006, p. 363), in her study on non-white British Muslim women at university, points out that understanding leadership from an Islamic perspective focuses on the

“interplay between knowledge and leadership”, and that signifies being able to use the knowledge acquired as a means of leadership. I realised that this interplay between expertise and leadership certainly needed more interrogation by me. My understanding of Islamic knowledge was limited since I was socialised into thinking that Islam did not promote females’ expertise and leadership. Furthermore, Shah (2006, p. 366) highlights that “in Islam, the association between religion, knowledge and teaching creates a discourse of educational leadership which elevates teaching or learning to a sacred duty of the highest order”. This highlights the focus on developing society in general to develop competent individuals that become valuable citizens. I needed to reveal how we, as Muslim female teachers might have made valuable leadership contributions within our personal and professional lives.

Having an understanding of the different concepts and terminology relating to Islamic leadership was necessary for my study. As acknowledged in Brooks and Mutohar (2018, p. 56), the term leadership is conceptualised in the Quran and hadith as *ra’in* (leader). The term *ra’in* is one of the most often used words for leadership, implying that an Islamic leader aims to work together with others with a shared vision or purpose in mind and to be responsible for those you lead. Furthermore, Brooks and Mutohar (2018, p. 56) report that another word which represented leadership is the term “Khalifa (steward)”. This was a name given to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who lead the *ummah* (a group of Muslims), and is used among Islamic religious groups. Finally, Brooks and Mutohar (2018, p. 56) point out that the word “*amir* (ruler)” is used to refer to government leaders. From my understanding, the word ruler signifies dominance, authority and exercising power over others. I understood that a leader is often followed by people who like him or her and are willing to co-operate, thus making my understanding a bit more complicated. As Muslim female teachers, I needed to understand how we might have dealt with leadership challenges we may have faced.

Similarly, my understanding of “*Khalifa* (steward)” became clouded, as, through the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), I understood stewardship as a means of guiding people in the right direction focusing on the needs of the organisation or institute. In all three descriptions, it is difficult to compartmentalise these words, as each one of them is closely linked to leadership within a variety of contexts where the aim to do good is prioritised. With this in mind, I became

more interested in understanding how Muslim female teachers enacted the different qualities of being ‘leader, ruler and steward’ within our personal and professional contexts.

In Islam, the leader is accorded the highest status, religious knowledge and authority, and only those who have “knowledge and understanding are capable of guiding and leading people” (Quran 3:7–8; 6:105; 22:55; 24:6) (Shah, 2006). If this religious knowledge is acquired, a person will lead appropriately, indicating the importance of knowledge acquisition. Shah (2006) strengthens this statement by pointing out that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a political and religious leader, and was also a *Muallam* (teacher), and taught many men and women during his time as leader of the ummah. Furthermore, Shah (2006) maintains that the roles and functions of teaching, learning and parenting intersect and cannot be separated from each other. The role of the teacher is equated to being the parent and is accorded extreme respect. As Muslim female teachers, I needed to examine how we integrated the functions of being a parent, leader, and teacher within our personal and professional spaces.

In my view, commendable leadership values are necessary for effective leadership. Brooks and Mutohar (2018, p. 55) affirm that it is vital for Islamic leaders to have leadership values of “*nasiha* (good council and sincere conduct)”. Furthermore, Brooks and Mutohar (2018, p. 55) highlight that the aspects of “*shura* (consultation), *ikhtilaf* (dissent), *maslaha* (seeking the common good), *amr bi ‘l ma ‘ruf wa al nahi an al munkar* (enjoining rights and forbidding wrong), *hisba* (accountability), and *tafakkur* (reflection)” are fundamental. My understanding of these terms concerning leadership in our personal and professional lives was essential, which implied that as Muslims, we should always be kind, considerate, and sincere when resolving issues and ensuring that others’ needs come first. *Shura* (consultation) is integral to all aspects relating to critical decision-making in Muslims’ personal and professional domains. My understanding of these terms concerning leadership within our personal and professional spheres was essential.

From my understanding, different communities have their own versions of leadership: “Different cultures, societies and communities construe leadership in different ways, the need to explore these constructions becomes highly significant in multiethnic contexts” (Shah, 2006, p. 366). With this in mind, I needed to explore the issue of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. Shah (2006, p. 378) highlights that “leadership perspectives are not fixed entities, they evolve and develop”, underlining that even within Muslim societies there are many different forms in practice over time,

and in many contexts and cultures. I needed to uncover these differences. From this, I understood that our leadership as Muslim female teachers would have evolved in relation to our culture and society.

Islamic education aims to develop good citizens who will be able to use their knowledge to follow the right path and make valuable contributions to society's upliftment, reinforcing the idea that education and leadership in Islam are for all (Shah, 2006). Therefore, I prioritised gaining a deeper understanding of how we, as Muslim female teachers, aimed to make valuable contributions to society by merging our secular and religious education. I wanted to explore how this merger might help us enacting leadership and serving as good role models to other Muslim women, encouraging more Muslim women to lead.

2.7 Women and leadership

To shed light on women and leadership, I consider women's leadership, feminist leadership and Muslim women and leadership.

2.7.1 Women's leadership

In understanding Muslim female teacher leadership, it was vital for me to read literature on women's leadership to grasp its relevance within our context and our lived experiences as Muslim women. In my understanding, women's leadership begins within the personal sphere. Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014, p. 1729) point out that "childhood homes formed a good starting point and foundation for the development of the women into leaders". This implies that many women (mothers and female children within our homes) played a relevant part in raising siblings or other children within their personal contexts. Furthermore, Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014) acknowledge that caring and safety play an essential part in enabling women's leadership within their homes. Mothers are often referred to as "ever-giving, endlessly loving, self-sacrificing and never asking for payback" when caring for their children (Yoonkyeong, 2003, pp. 79-80). Looking ahead, I realised that caregiving within our homes laid a strong foundation for women's leadership.

In my understanding, women have their own leadership styles. Shapira et al. (2011, p. 27) point out that "in a series of studies on women's leadership, it was found that men and women were distinguished by the way in which they lead organizations". According to Shapira et al. (2011), women's leadership styles tend to be more flexible and inclusive than their male counterparts'

typically authoritative and supervisory styles. Furthermore, women's leadership styles are generally collaborative and focus on relationships with others, and they can be more passive leaders in schools, whose primary interest in a career choice is teaching (Shapira et al., 2011). In my view, this passivity is closely linked to gender stereotyping, which needed to be further investigated in my study.

In looking at gender discrimination against women in the personal and professional sphere, Sümer (2006, p. 64) claims that "gender role stereotypes are of the perception that women possess less leadership abilities". This implies that because of the stereotypical roles of caregiver, mother and wife associated with women, no other leadership capabilities seem possible. Furthermore, Priola (2007, p. 23) highlights that "masculine and feminine identities are produced by negotiating gender differences". From this, I came to understand that as we engage with 'male' and 'female', we continually work out what is meant for each gender and whether it is correct or not. I came to realise that there were lots of tensions between the gender roles in the workplace. As I engaged with the literature (for example, Priola, 2007), I realised that some male academics in the United Kingdom (UK) did not like to work under "bossy and domineering" women as female managers tended to enact more "male powers in an endeavor to control their work environment and emotions" (Priola, 2007, p. 36). It seemed that women hid their emotions from their male counterparts as they wanted to be seen as authoritative figures, and they needed to show their worth and strength in leadership roles. Closely linked with dealing with the tensions of negotiated gender is self-esteem.

In understanding women's leadership, I saw how women's self-esteem can be affected by gender discrimination. For instance, Hampton and Desjourdy (2013, p. 79) highlight in their study on the Black Community in Montreal how "black girls' feelings about their appearance are strongly correlated with confidence and self-esteem". This signifies that physical appearance impacts girls' self-image and how they view themselves and are viewed. Additionally, Hampton and Desjourdy (2013, p. 79) state that the impact of the girl's self-image could directly affect their ability to cope with "stress and develop healthy relationships", once again shaping their identity. These authors argue that "female self-worth is closely tied to appearance and cultural ideals about female beauty and perfection" (Hampton & Desjourdy, 2013, p. 79). This implies that cultural beliefs about female appearance impacted women's self-esteem in the study. They were expected to dress

according to culturally specific requirements. From this, I realised that self-esteem, identity and the imposition of cultural beliefs and practices are interrelated and profoundly impact female leadership. I needed to get a deeper understanding of their impact on our leadership as Muslim female teachers.

Understanding women's leadership experiences and understanding the impact of patriarchy, culture, and religion was important. Obstacles encountered by some female principals from the Arab minority in Israel include "cultural perceptions that identify feminism with ineffectiveness in management and leadership" (Shapira et al., 2011, p. 27). In my view, cultural socialisation impacts women's leadership. For example, women from the Arab minority in Israel find it challenging to separate the imposition of cultural expectations from leadership (Shapira et al., 2011). I needed to explore the impact of patriarchy, culture and religion on our lives as Muslim female teachers and how they shaped and reshaped our abilities as leaders in our personal and professional lives. As I continued to read various texts on female leadership, I grasped that several factors impact women's leadership. These factors include elements within our society and are acknowledged by Moorosi (2010, p. 559), who states that

social barriers in the form of the sex role stereotypes, and political, traditional and historical influences are even more problematic because they are so deeply rooted in the society and in the institutional cultures that are therefore not easy to eradicate

In my view, these factors are linked to our personal and professional spheres. The social barriers of stereotyping, and cultural and religious influences, together with the legacies and traditions of the past, are deeply embedded in society, making it difficult to change mindsets. I needed to gain an understanding of how these social barriers influenced our leadership as Muslim women.

From my engagement with a range of texts, it became clear that many women encountered challenges in enacting leadership. For example, Moorosi (2010, p. 558) highlighted that although women have "broken the glass ceiling" in occupying leadership, they face challenges in enacting leadership in South African schools. Dantow (1998, p. 66) says that the "schools, like other work environments are shaped by gender relations in which men have a higher status than women and gender is one of the most powerful determinants, far more powerful than other school characteristics", suggesting that unequal gender relations still cause problems within many school communities.

Female leaders face many challenges, including personal issues and expectations from society about their role as women. As, Moorosi (2010, p. 558) indicated, “South African women principals relied on support from family members such as mothers and sibling sisters as well as domestic helpers and far less from their spouses”. From this, I understood that support from other women is essential in women’s quest for leadership opportunities. Some women consider raising a family more critical. Others manage to fit in work and family responsibilities, while some prefer not to have children or even marry (Airini et al., 2010). Challenges can emerge within the home and the personal space and gradually filter through into the professional sphere. An investigation into the lived experiences of Muslim female teachers within our private spaces was necessary.

As school principals, “women experience more obstacles than men on their career route and their experiences are influenced by personal, organizational and social factors” (Moorosi, 2010, p. 547). The environment, age, culture, religion, societal influence, finance, and lifestyle challenge women’s leadership in schools. Lumby, Azaola, de Wet, Skekrvin, and Williamson (2010, pp. 24-25) point out that “language, ethnicity, culture, religion and age” impacted women’s leadership positions as principals in South African schools. I needed to uncover the leadership challenges we faced as Muslim female teachers and how we engaged with them in our contexts.

Furthermore, Shapira et al. (2011), in their study on female school principals from various communities in the Arab society in Israel, argue that Muslim women in leadership faced many hurdles. From their study, Shapira et al. (2011, p. 38), highlight that the “personal, social and professional narratives of female school principals, educational leaders and pioneers, testify to cultural transition processes within Israeli Arab society”, implying that female school principals experienced a transition because of the Arab women’s interaction with the Jewish community and their personal empowerment and determination. Thus I understand that together with enacting leadership, female principals needed to act as role models for other women and that their leadership style should combine authority and democracy.

As I further probed information regarding challenges in female principals’ lives, it is noteworthy to reflect upon the literature of Makura (2009), who focused his study on Zimbabwean female school heads. Makura (2009, p. 9) found that there was a “shortage of financial and material resources, together with negative comments from teachers towards female school heads” as well as teachers who “verbally abused female heads”. Furthermore, parents were often uncooperative

towards these female heads. Most often, the “female principals’ vision to grow the school was hampered by the community” (Makura, 2009, p. 10). From this, I gathered that the communities we live and work in affect our ability to enact leadership as women. Arar and Queder (2011, p. 420) claim that a minority of Arab women in Israel faced various challenges such as “confrontation from men and a lone battle in their aspiration to occupy leadership positions”. These Arab women heads in Israel also faced challenges of “family responsibility of being wife, mother as well as principal” (Arar & Queder, 2011, p. 420). As Lumby et al. (2010, p. 11) state, “being a female principal impacted on family life as wife and mother”. There is always a “tension between [women’s] identities as managers and that of their personal duties such as wife, mother” (Priola, 2007, p. 36). This multitasking compels women to make choices or balance various duties. In my view, as women in leadership, there is a constant battle with challenges in our personal and professional spaces. I needed to get a deeper understanding of dealing with these challenges.

In occupying leadership positions as women, we are faced with many challenges. In his study on Zimbabwean female school principals’ experiences, Makura (2009, p. 1) states that “female school heads face challenges because of their position”. Similarly, Lumby et al. (2010) point out that when women are appointed as principals, they face many challenges on account of their gender. Furthermore, Lumby et al. (2010) highlight that in enacting leadership, women were discriminated against because of their gender, which impacted on their physical and mental health. Women were told to quit their leadership positions if they could not deal with the pressure (Lumby et al., 2010). This discriminatory behaviour experienced by Zimbabwean principals can be linked to challenges of discrimination we Muslim female teachers might have experienced. I needed to know about these experiences. Shapira et al. (2011), in their study on Arab female principals, highlight that Arab female principals in Israel constituted an ethnic minority and suffered from discrimination, which stemmed from the way they were perceived and overpowered by their conservative society (Shapira, et al., 2011). From this, I began to understand how women in power faced challenges and how this continued struggle impacted their identity. I needed to know how such experiences affected us as Muslim female teachers enacting leadership.

From my understanding, in reading literature on women’s leadership, fewer women are in education leadership and management jobs than men. For example, Sümer (2006), in her study on women in higher education in Turkey and Sweden, points out that there are more men occupying

management and leadership positions at Turkish universities. Furthermore, Sümer (2006, p. 64) points out a “wage gap”, between males and females occupying leadership positions across the world. In my view, this indicates the prevalence of gender discrimination in the professional sphere, as more power is vested in male leaders in a space where women continue to struggle to occupy leadership positions.

Archard’s (2013, p. 51) study on women leaders from Australia and the UK highlighted that women were missing from leadership because of their “own choices and cultural restraints”. From this, I understood that society, culture and women’s priorities impacted women’s leadership. Hence, “the social and cultural constructions of gender continue to impact on women in relation to their ability to be perceived as leaders, as well as their attainment of leadership positions” (Archard, 2013, p. 53). To encourage leadership opportunities, it is essential to note women’s diverse backgrounds in South Africa. Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong and Holtam (2010, p. 816) point out that “in their attempts to carve new spaces as school leaders, the realities of South African women across races are filled with tensions and complexities”. In my understanding, these tensions continually affect women’s ability to enact leadership. I needed to understand the social and cultural constructions of gender that influenced us as Muslim female teachers.

In my view, educating Muslim girls can be seen as an essential aspect of preparing them for future leadership. This is supported by Archard (2013, p. 70) in her study on women leaders from Australia and the UK, who pointed out that “a philosophy of leadership development for girls that must be adopted by schools in order to successfully aid the development of future women leaders”. I began to understand the importance of enabling girls to enhance women’s leadership opportunities, especially in our South African context. This is reaffirmed by Archard (2013, p. 70), who states that “women have much to offer society as leaders; therefore, the importance of developing future women leaders remains paramount”. Therefore, schools need to improve girls’ education and for these girls to learn to lead (Mogadime et al., 2010). Consequently, I needed to explore Muslim girls’ preparation to receive education and embrace leadership opportunities.

Furthermore, Archard (2013, p. 51) highlights a need for “creating leadership interest in girls” to be prepared to understand the importance of women within society and occupy leadership positions later on in life. Furthermore, Archard (2013) also stresses the importance of teenage girls being exposed to leadership opportunities within communities and being exposed to female role models.

From this, it is clear that adolescent girls should be provided with the scope to enhance their skills through leadership opportunities from an early age and throughout their lives. Young women should be taught about leadership qualities and how these impacts life as females in a challenging society. From this, I understand the need for female role models as well as the need for encouraging girls to embrace leadership opportunities. I needed to ask whether we, as Muslim female teachers received and offered others such opportunities.

2.7.2 Feminist leadership

Feminism, in my view, has a significant impact on women's leadership. Adichie (2015, p. 47) points out that feminism is about the "social, political and economic equality of the sexes" and also "speaking up for what is right, being able to say no and protesting for their rights as a woman". Adichie (2015, p. 48) argues that feminism is about both men and women understanding that there is a problem with "gender discrimination and taking the initiative to fix problems of gender". Thus, I saw that women need to stand against gender discrimination in their personal and professional spaces and to fight for their rights.

From my engagement with the literature, it became clear that feminism opposes women's subordination in being considered inferior to men and lower in rank. According to Haw, Shah and Hanifa (1998), feminist educational thinking aims to better understand education and seek a balanced and equitable space for men and women. The problematic issues of race, gender, and ethnicity have continued to be the most contentious in feminist research on education.

Feminist leadership has had a tremendous impact on shaping the lives of many girls and women in general. Khalil and DeCuir (2018), in their study on American Muslims in Islamic schools, point out that feminist leadership encompasses being good role models by leading with the values of empathy and encouraging change in practice. According to Khalil and DeCuir (2018), Muslim women played an active role in promoting girls going to school and seeking education in an Islamic environment. Furthermore, these authors assert that previously, Muslim women and mothers played an active role in leadership in being teachers and eradicating Islamophobia. To understand feminist leadership, Khalil and DeCuir (2018) also state that we need to understand Muslim women's experiences and the ethos in which they work and look at the silences of "colour, voice and patriarchy" that impacted the leadership. These issues of colour, voice and patriarchy needed to be further investigated within our stories as Muslim female teachers

According to Khalil and DeCuir (2018, p. 96), Islamic feminism also “seeks to find answers beyond gender and include racial, social and economic inequities”. Islamic feminism prides itself on social inclusion and upliftment of future generations of women, who will be free from social and gender injustices and oppression, as well as the transformation of women’s issues such as “seeking knowledge, raising consciousness, and resisting injustices” (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018, p. 97). I needed to investigate how Muslim female teachers sought transformation through leadership, conveying that women must raise themselves up against all injustices.

In looking at our lives as Muslim female teachers, it was necessary to explore feminism. Johnson (2014, p. 4) elaborates on her thoughts in ‘A Feminist is a Feminist’, in saying that “girls are as good as boys”. She speaks about her childhood and grandmother’s influence in shaping her into the woman she is today. As an agent of advocacy of feminism, she states that it has been a constant struggle to raise both sons and daughters (Johnson, 2014).

Likewise, in her study on Nigerian women, Adichie (2015, p. 3) highlights that the words “feminist” and “feminism” are limited by stereotypes. Her experience of feminism and stereotyping started from her days in school, when “boys were chosen to be monitors”. This had an impact on her thinking of boys’ and girls’ stereotyped roles. From this, I understand that as women, we can be stereotyped into engaging in typically feminine activities. I anticipated that my other Muslim female teacher participants would have their own stories of stereotyping to tell. I needed to get a deeper understanding of how stereotyping gendered roles impacted our leadership.

It is also essential to understand the different feminist theories, including liberal feminism, critical feminism, and radical feminism. Liberal feminism focuses on women’s ability to maintain their equality through their actions and choices. According to Lorber (2010, p. 10), liberal feminism can also be called “gender reform feminist, which aims to create a gender balance, where women have equal power, prestige, and economic resources”. The emphasis is on making the legal and political rights of women equal to those of men. Critical feminism, on the other hand, is aimed at a critical understanding of gender inequality. Lorber (2010, p. 13) states that this form of feminism seeks to “dismantle gender categories, overturn the gendered social order and ultimately create a non-gendered social order”. From this, I needed to understand why gender inequality exists in both personal and professional spaces.

Radical feminists view society as fundamentally a “patriarchy in which men dominate and oppress women” (Lorber, 2010). Lorber (2010, p. 11) refers to radical feminism as “gender resistance feminism, “aiming to fight male supremacy and dominance. While radical feminism is a perspective within feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society in which male power is eliminated in all social and economic contexts, there has been a change to this view as there is less “focus on women-only space” (Mackay, 2015, p. 1).

From this, I understood that I aimed to draw on the liberal feminism theory within this study as I sought to understand gender inequality within Muslim women’s personal and public spaces. With this in mind, I hoped to find a gendered balance, where women could be accorded the power and respect they deserve.

Through much of the literature on women’s leadership, it became clear to me that “women experience more obstacles than men on their career route and their experiences are influenced by personal, organizational and social factors” (Moorosi, 2010, p. 547). The need to understand these obstacles within our personal and professional spheres as Muslim female teachers became a burning desire.

2.7.3 Muslim women and leadership

For my study, it was essential to get a deeper understanding of religious texts and constructions of Muslim women as leaders, together with the changing views of male and female roles and implications for Muslim women enacting leadership.

2.7.3.1 Religious texts and constructions of Muslim women as leaders

To achieve a clearer understanding of Muslim women’s leadership, it was first necessary to understand secular and religious texts and how these impacted on Muslim female teachers’ leadership. According to Khalil and DeCuir (2018, p. 96) in their study on American Muslims in Islamic schools, Islamic feminism is where “Muslim women’s lived experiences, beliefs, dispositions, values and attributes are anchored around the principles in Islamic texts, whereby gender equality and social justice derives its understanding from the Quran”. Some examples of feminism in Islam are “Muslim women’s rights to self-determine financial independence, marriage and family relationships, social and political participation, including education, and, most

importantly, the right to engage in or resist any socially ascribed gender roles” (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018, p. 96).

From this, I understand that Muslim women’s actions are linked to the Quran and hadith, which accord them certain rights and privileges. One such opportunity is to be educated, where the hadith mentions the words of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” and that “seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim”. This highlights that education is intended for both men and women. Syed (2000) reaffirms this, pointing out that education is the birthright of every Muslim and Muslimah (boy and girl).

As discussed briefly in Chapter One, to affirm women’s participation and their contributions, it is essential to mention two famous women in Islamic history that support Muslim women’s leadership (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). These two Muslim women (*Hazrath* [title give to a person of great honour] Khadijah and Aishah) from the Prophetic era are just a small example of how Muslim women enacted leadership. Khadijah, the first wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was a wealthy tradeswoman, the richest woman in Mecca, who exported goods as far away as Syria. To manage her large business, she employed several men, and to do so at that time, as a woman in Arabia, necessitated a high level of understanding and wisdom. Aishah, the youngest wife of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]), was talented and had an excellent memory. As a Muslim scholar, she narrated more than 2000 hadith (sayings about the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]) practices and taught many people. She had a great love of learning and became known for her intelligence and sharp sense of judgement. In my view, not only men but women in the Prophetic era played a pivotal role in leadership. I wanted to explore how and why women in our South African Muslim context did or did not emulate the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Educating Muslim women is heavily reliant on understanding “identity, patriarchy, culture, social class, inequality and discrimination” (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010, p. 325). From this, I understand that educating Muslim women is determined by factors within the home, and I needed to uncover them. Ahmad (2001, p. 149) in her study on British Muslim women, highlights that Muslim women’s “social and personal identities are reconstructed in both public and private domain”. They continually have to deal with the challenges of expectations and opportunities within their personal and professional lives. In my understanding, it became clear that our education as Muslim women had its roots embedded within our Muslim homes and society at large. Also, “it was important to

consider Islam as it relates to educational leadership and the experiences of Muslim students, practitioners, and scholars” (Brooks, 2018, p. 51). Thus, I understood that our leadership practices as Muslim female teachers were likely to have strong ties with Islamic teachings, which could significantly impact our personal and professional lives.

As women, our lives are influenced by the views of others. Shapira et al. (2011, p. 38) reinforce this viewpoint, highlighting that “each woman’s personal story is, first of all, a story of a family, and a story of empowerment, despite the community’s views and restrictions for women”. This suggests that each story within the study reflects our personal lives, family enablements, restrictions, male hegemony, and educational experiences, together with the desire to challenge our situation. I was interested in exploring how our family lives influenced our leadership. Ahmad (2001, p. 145) highlighted that “educational achievement was positioned alongside traditions”. I understood that our leadership achievements as Muslim female teachers were likely to have been influenced by our traditions, and I needed to explore this.

Muslim female school leaders can contribute significantly to female empowerment. For example, Shapira et al. (2011, p. 26) found that “women principals contribute significantly to the development of Arab schools [in Israel]”. I appreciated Muslim female principals’ importance in uplifting schools, empowering themselves, and becoming role models to other women in their community. However, I also saw that there is often an absence of “role models” (Arar & Queder, 2011, p. 426) and few women leaders to emulate. I understood that there are still very few Muslim women in leadership, acting as role models and inspiring young Muslim women towards leadership. Due to this, Muslim women can lack leadership experience and expertise, often resulting in them being too strict in their efforts to emulate male leaders (Arar & Queder, 2011). Arar and Queder (2011, p. 426) highlight a “transition of styles of women principals, from strict to empathetic”. They indicate how women principals in their study moved from being very authoritarian and showing their power in typically male ways to being more empathetic and caring. They explain how this transition was made as women principals moved from their initial stage of enacting leadership to feeling more confident in formal leadership positions.

Through my engagement with a range of literature on Muslim women’s leadership, I came to see that many of the women in these studies had a desire to “innovate, change norms and present a new model of a woman who can fulfil a central role in public discourse” (Shapira et al., 2011, p.

38). In my view, this often meant going against the expected role function of Muslim women and crossing new frontiers. Furthermore, Shapira et al. (2011) highlight that while women could occupy a role in the public space, they also depended on their fathers or brothers' patriarchal influence and, later, spouses. Likewise, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 313), in their study on British Muslim parents, point out that "parents play a significant role by constraining their daughter's freedom and choices as they worried about the effects of "westernization". From this, I perceived that Muslim daughters could experience restricted freedom in British society. Some fathers felt that, as a cultural notion, "marriage was the ultimate goal for their daughters" (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010, p. 321). This implies that as parents of girl children, their primary responsibility was to marry off their daughters. Hence, I saw a need for fathers and brothers within patriarchal societies to work towards their daughters' freedom of choice (Shapira et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 316) highlight the dual expectations of parents who want the best of both worlds by demanding that their daughters be "modest, secluding themselves from the world of men", but, at the same time, that they get the "best of western education and maintain their religious and cultural values". Investigating patriarchy and parents' influence in our families was essential, as each of us Muslim female teachers would have a tale to tell. I hoped to reveal how education, religion, culture, and our relationships with parents affected our leadership.

2.7.3.2 Changing views on male and female roles

In their study on first-generation British Muslim Mirpuri parents, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 319) found that boys had "unlimited freedom", while girls experienced "curtailed activities". The term "izzat (shame)" was used to censure girls if they brought disrespect to the family name. Similarly, Ahmad (2001, p. 144) points out that "a great deal of honour was invested in sons", and they were viewed as future "breadwinners". As Muslim women, this unequal treatment in our personal and professional spaces needed to be investigated concerning our leadership.

Some parents have begun to change their attitudes about educating their girl children. Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 321) further highlight in their study on second generation British Muslim Mirpuri parents that some saw no distinction between boys and girls and resented the "double standards of treating young men and women differently". Furthermore, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 320) point out that there is "equal sin whether you a boy or girl" in Islam. Parents worried equally about their sons' "morally corrupt behavior" such as associating with the wrong company, engaging in

criminal activities and consuming drugs and alcohol (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010, p. 320). I realised that second-generation parents sometimes began to understand the difference between religious and cultural practices. Furthermore, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 321) point out that second-generation Mirpuri parents were more “optimistic and felt daughters [would] maintain values and repel western attractions”. They thus felt it was important for their daughters to be allowed to complete their education. I wanted to explore parental views towards educating girls in the stories of Muslim female teachers.

Moreover, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 320) found that there was a demand for “single sex schools from parents, where there was a mixture of western and religious education” as well as a demand for a “Muslim school so their daughters could study as much as they wanted”. Also, Ahmad (2001, p. 144) found that “educating daughters is seen as an investment symbolizing their value both within the family and to those outside”. Furthermore, Ahmad (2001) claims that a Muslim family’s social status could be uplifted by educating daughters. Educating daughters was seen by some Muslim parents as valuable, and daughters’ domestic roles were “modified to accommodate the needs of their study” (Ahmad, 2001, p. 144). Yet, Ahmad’s (2001, p. 147) study also revealed that Muslim parents were faced with a “double-bind situation where too little education results in the family are viewed as being backwards and old fashioned”. However, with “too much education, daughters could risk pricing themselves outside the marriage market and going past their sell-by dates” (Ahmad, 2001, p. 147). Even for educated Muslim female teachers, thoughts like these could plague our self-esteem. I needed to bring to light these thoughts and consider how they impacted and overshadowed our education and leadership opportunities.

2.7.3.3 Implications for females taking on leadership roles

I wanted to understand Muslim parents’ attitudes and their understanding of the tensions in educating their sons and daughters. I wanted to explore these tensions in relation to South African Muslim women teachers and their desire to be educated and enact leadership. I also needed to understand how changing views about educating women could bring a sense of fulfilment, accentuated status in the community, and accord pride to parents.

As Muslim female teachers, our traditional values are often very dear to us. I needed to understand how we could integrate our value system into our aspirations towards enacting leadership. I aimed

to explore how we might lead without going against our values or having our actions misinterpreted by others within our personal and professional spaces.

2.8 Distributed leadership

Working collaboratively towards a shared vision and success of the school is a dream for many teachers. According to Stephenson et al. (2018), distributed leadership can also be referred to as shared leadership because it involves democracy, collaboration, collegiality, and working for an organisation's common good or working towards a common goal. Similarly, Spillane et al. (2001, p. 27) point out that "leadership needs to move beyond people who occupy formal positions", and that distributed leadership can be used to change leadership activity in an institution. From this, I came to understand that people within organisations need to be enabled in power relations to meet or change the organisation's desired outcomes. Spillane et al. (2001, p. 8) reinforce this concept by saying that distributed leadership leads to "innovations in contexts as contexts depend heavily on the practice of distributed leadership".

Thus I understood that through distributed leadership, the vision of leaders within an organisation is realised. Distributed leadership occurs when "human activity is distributed between 'actors, artifacts and situation' together with collaboration", involving the distribution of tasks and moving away from individualised leadership (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 9). In my view, this entails working together. Distributed leadership also involves sharing work within a context and having connectivity between distributed leaders and working together for a common purpose (Spillane et al., 2001). Likewise, Stephenson et al. (2018) argue that shared or distributed leadership minimises ranking and encourages all personnel to work on the same level. In my view, this working together makes real the dream of people to lead in an organisation.

Furthermore, Grant (2009, p 513) highlights that principals need to share their power with others in the institution: "In keeping with the notion of distributed leadership, teachers need to be encouraged to find their voices, take up their potential as leaders and change agents to produce a liberating culture in their schools". From my understanding, principals need to act as change agents and enable teacher leadership.

Distributed leadership requires collaboration in different avenues within professional contexts. "Leaders, followers and context" are essential in distributed leadership, and distributed leadership

involves “mobilizing staff and clients, changing instruction, mobilizing resources and transformation” (Spillane et al., 2001, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, Williams (2011, p. 191) highlights that “distributed leadership is not the exclusive domain of one individual, but resides in many people” and that distributed leadership is essential in addressing a lack of leadership among certain populations, such as women. Distributed leadership is aimed at capacity building and democracy. Distributed leadership is about the “division of labour and collaboration in the workplace” (Woods & Gronn, 2009, p. 440). In my view, it is about sharing tasks to achieve a common purpose.

As a means to empower teachers within schools, “distributed leadership has come to prominence in school management discourse as a means to achieve the participation and empowerment of teachers and to create democratic schools” (Hatcher, 2005, p. 253). From this, I came to understand the need for dispersed leadership structures within schools. There is also a need for “redistributing power within the school” for teacher leadership to take place (Hatcher, 2005, p. 263).

I needed to understand our cooperative leadership experiences as Muslim female teachers and how our principals and other senior managers enabled or restrained our leadership.

2.9 Teacher leadership

In this section, I aim to reach a clearer understanding of teacher leadership. I begin by unpacking teacher leadership under the following sections: working together; bringing about change; moving forward; teaching and learning, trusting relationships; and the impact of our personal and professional contexts. I end by referring to Grant’s teacher leadership model and explain my reasons for using this model.

2.9.1 Working together

For teacher leadership to take place, teachers need to work together towards a common purpose. According to Harris and Lambert (2003), teacher leadership needs to be fostered within our schools and should focus on achieving distributed responsibility for the entire school’s betterment. Furthermore, Harris and Lambert (2003, p. 3) indicate that teacher leadership is about “learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively”. This reinforces the idea that leadership is not individual but rather a group process in which a range of people can participate. From this, I understand that teacher leadership is about working together for a common resolution.

2.9.2 Bringing about change

I needed to understand the process of teacher leadership in contributing to bringing about change in schools. Hence, it is essential to note that “teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively influence their colleagues, principals and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of improved student learning and achievement” (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017, p. 357). Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley, and Somaroo (2010) endorse this, pointing out that leadership is a process that brings about change, encouraging thinking and behaviour modification to suit the school’s needs. Likewise, Phelps (2008, p. 119) points out that for “schools to improve more teachers need to function as leaders”.

Similarly, Wenner and Campbell (2017) state that teacher leaders can impact the school, pedagogy, and professional community members. Wenner and Campbell (2017, p. 164) point out that teacher leadership is vital for “school reform”, and this change is what we need to embark on as teachers. Besides, Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 229) highlight that teacher leadership involves the “interaction of all participants working together on a shared vision”, and this vision is to take our schools forward. All teachers “possess the potential to become leaders”, says Phelps (2008, p. 122), and to my knowledge, Muslim female teachers had this potential. Still, the question was whether we acknowledged this potential. I needed to better understand how we, as Muslim female teachers, attempted to bring about change in our schools and beyond.

2.9.3 Moving forward

In my understanding, teacher leadership is a movement from one step to another in a teacher’s life. In the case of the participants in this study, I aimed to explore our innate desire to become leaders within our professional and personal spheres. Muijs and Harris (2007, p. 112) highlight that teacher leadership is considered a set of “behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively and is centrally concerned with the relationships and connections among individuals within a school”. Thus I understand the need for collaboration to take place within schools. Furthermore, Muijs and Harris (2007) point out that teacher leadership is associated with distributive leadership. Teacher leadership requires active steps to make up leadership teams and provide teachers with leadership roles. A culture of trust, collaboration and shared vision are essential, and “clear line management structures and strong leadership development programmes” (Muijs & Harris, 2007, p. 111) are needed.

2.9.4 Teaching and learning

As teachers, our core duties focus on teaching and learning. Teacher leadership results in improved teacher and student learning (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012). Furthermore, Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) state that teacher leaders are intrinsically driven to work together, take chances, reflect, engage with their colleagues, and introspect on their own and other teachers' practices. Grant (2009 p. 514) highlights that "teachers need to shift from a follower role to one of operating as teacher leaders, whether they are informal leaders or in a formal leadership role such as that of head of department or learning area coordinator". This suggests a need for teachers to be proactive and embrace leadership opportunities that come their way. They need to spearhead opportunities and serve as role models for others. Grant (2009, p. 514) argues that the only way that schools will be able to meet the challenges they face is to "tap the potential of all staff members and allow teachers to experience a sense of ownership and inclusivity and lead aspects of the change process". By "allowing for teacher leadership to emerge, genuine and sustained changes are more likely to occur and, over time, a collaborative ethos with an emphasis on sound teaching and learning is likely to emerge" (Grant, 2009, p. 514). In my view, this is about encouraging teachers to embrace leadership as the opportunity arises, bringing about an improvement in teaching and learning.

Teacher leadership is deemed necessary to enabling improvements in schools. Frost and Harris (2003, p. 494) argue that teacher leadership contributes to the "improvement of school effectiveness, breathes new life into school, rebuilds schools as learning communities". Likewise, teacher leaders work towards achieving "change", and they make things "happen" (Grant, 2009, p. 53). In my study, I wanted to explore how, as experienced Muslim female teachers, we wanted to 'breathe new life' into our schools and to what extent we were enabled to do so. Muijs and Harris (2007, p. 131) support this, arguing that "teacher leadership can only flourish where both school culture and associated structures allow it to develop".

Power and positioning of people is an essential aspect of educational leadership. Grant et al. (2010, p. 403) state that power is a crucial educational leadership element. Furthermore, Grant (2009, p. 57) emphasises that power is "central to leadership and becomes visible in the way people are positioned in schools, where they are positioned and who does the positioning". This power hierarchy illustrates the authority and the distribution of power within schools. This was something I wanted to understand in relation to Muslim women teachers' leadership.

2.9.5 Trusting relationships

Having positive characteristics as a teacher is essential for leadership. Arar and Haj-Yehia (2018, p.78) point out that desirable attributes for teacher leaders are “morality, cooperation, modelling, loyalty, collective responsibility, compassion, containment, and flexibility”. This suggests that teacher leaders should show the qualities of leading with correct ethics, teamwork and the ability to be amenable to suggestions. Arar and Haj-Yehia, (2018, p. 78) point out that certain practices, such as the “construction of positive relationship with teachers” are recommended, implying that working collaboratively is essential. Similarly, Muijs and Harris (2007, p. 131) highlight that “teacher leadership seems to operate best where there are high degrees of trust”, once again reinforcing the use of ethics and morals in ethical leadership. From this, I understood that working collaboratively with trust and integrity would be essential to Muslim female teachers’ successful leadership.

2.9.6 Impact of personal and professional contexts on teacher leadership

Diversity within our South African schools is a reality and is highlighted by the many cultures, religions, economic status and varied contexts. Teacher leadership is influenced by context, culture and financial situations (Naicker et al., 2016). Likewise, Shah (2006, p. 378) claims that we need to “develop a leadership model to meet the challenges of changing population structures in schools”. Muijs and Harris (2007, pp. 131-132) highlight that for teacher leadership to occur, “beliefs matter and that it [is] important to have a common belief within the school culture and that there should be structures which can promote or encourage collaboration”. There should be trust, belief and collaboration between staff members within our professional spaces. This suggests that the school staff have an essential task to work collaboratively with a shared vision to meet challenges. I needed to explore how Muslim female teachers might have dealt with working collaboratively with trust and belief in our different contexts.

In my view, excellent leadership for teachers, colleagues, management and principals begins in the classroom and later shifts to other spaces within the professional context. Sinha and Hanuscin (2017, p. 367) point out that teacher leadership “starts within the classroom and then transitions outside the classroom”. From this, I realised that teacher leadership is essential to “meet the needs of students in schools” (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 165). This suggests that teacher leaders will prioritise the needs of learners. As teachers, our leadership within the classroom is a common way

to display our expertise. A “teacher leader is continually learning and honing one’s practice, continues to learn and has a deep knowledge in curriculum and instructional practices”, and spends time “perfecting her craft”, they are “lifelong learners” (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 5). This implies that teacher leaders’ “work is underpinned by intrinsic motivation and emotional commitment to provide the best for their students” (Day & Gu, 2007, p.427).

2.9.7 Grant’s model of teacher leadership and my justification for using it

I drew on Grant’s (2012) model of teacher leadership to get a deeper understanding of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership within different spaces. Grant’s teacher leadership model is made up of various components of teacher leadership and aims to bring about “change in schools” (Grant, 2009, p. 51). I used Grant’s (2012) model, which emerged from research conducted in a South African school context. In referring to Grant’s (2012) model, I could relate her conclusions to the South African school contexts of my participants.

Grant’s (2012) model endorses the need to understand the enactment of teacher leadership in schools. In this model, Grant (2012, p. 55) focuses on assisting in the “stimulation of teachers, regardless of designation, to think about the four semi-distinct areas or zones in which they are currently, or in the future might wish to lead in a school”. To understand the different zones and roles, I unpack these zones to get a clearer understanding of teachers enacting leadership, especially as Muslim female teachers.

2.9.7.1 Zone one: Leading within the classroom

As teachers, we continually find ourselves experimenting with different teaching and learning strategies. In zone one, a teacher leader aims to “continue to teach to improve one’s own teaching’ within the classroom” (Grant, 2012, p. 56). According to Grant (2012, p. 56), the teacher is the master in her environment, and her roles may include: “use of innovative methodology and assessment strategies, improving their own knowledge of teaching and learning and engaging in classroom action research”. From this, I came to understand that the teacher can experiment with various teaching and learning resources within the classroom without being intimidated. Key features of this zone include “keeping abreast of new developments and participation in CPD [continued professional development] and staff development workshops, planning and preparing

interesting activities and the use of appropriate resources” (p. 56). Grant (2012, p. 56) also states that this zone targets

conducting assessment, self-evaluation and reflection of teaching and engaging in good record-keeping, maintaining discipline and pastoral care-nurturing environment for their learners, leading and teaching in the classroom without controlling or interferences from others, ‘boss of one’s own space’ and encouraging change within the classroom for the benefit of the learners.

It is clear from the roles mentioned above that teacher leadership will be the greatest within this zone. Teachers spend most of our time within our classroom as we engage with learners in all teaching and learning activities. Grant (2012, p. 57) claims that “often teachers in this zone find themselves isolated from their colleagues as they spend large amounts of time with their learners within the classroom”. Within the private space of the classroom, teachers have “relative freedom to lead this teaching and learning process as they see fit” (Grant, 2012, p. 56). For teacher leadership to have more of an impact, it should “ideally begin within the classroom as expert teachers continue to teach and improve their own teaching” (Grant, 2012, p. 57). I needed to understand our leadership experiences as Muslim female teachers within our classrooms and the roles these played in our development as leaders.

2.9.7.2 Zone two: Leading beyond the classroom as they develop working relationships with other teachers

Working collaboratively with other colleagues is key to leadership. Within this zone, there are three significant roles where the teachers operate as “curriculum leaders, grade heads or leaders of various committees either formally or informally” (Grant, 2012, p. 57). Within this zone, Grant (2012, p. 57) highlights the role of teachers in “providing curriculum development knowledge within one’s own school”, which is reflected in role two as: “engaging in team teaching, participation in joint co (co/extra/co-curricular) and curriculum development, participation in subject committee meetings and taking voluntary initiatives, attending DoE [Department of Education] workshops”. Teachers within this zone share information from meetings with other staff, coordinate extra and co-curricular activities (e.g., sports and cultural activities, etc.), and are instrumental in adjusting the curriculum to suit their contexts’ needs.

Learning from each other as teachers is vital for our development. Furthermore, Grant (2012, p. 57) points out that role three within zone two is concerned with leading in-service education and assisting others within one's own school, which is associated with: "forging relationships and build rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place, partaking in staff development initiatives, peer coaching, mentoring and inducting, building skills and confidence and working with integrity, trust and transparency". This reinforces the idea of leading to assist other teachers in training and educating. I needed investigate how we Muslim female teachers worked within our contexts to educate other teachers. I also needed to understand our access to training, coaching and mentoring opportunities as Muslim female teachers.

Self, peer, and other forms of assessments within school contexts are critical to school success. Grant (2012, p.57) describes role four within zone two as concerned with "participating in performance evaluation of teachers in one's own school" indicated by: "engaging in IQMS [integrated quality management system] activities such as peer assessment (involvement in development support groups), informal peer assessment, moderation of assessment tasks and reflections of core and co/extra-curricular activities". Teachers within this zone can work in smaller "learning communities" (Grant, 2012, p.57) and also distribute power within these learning communities to achieve the goals of the school. Also, teachers should be encouraged to participate in all forms of assessment within their professional context.

Grant (2012, p. 58) points out that leadership within this zone moves beyond the classroom, encouraging teachers to "enact leadership in small learning communities within the school and is reflective of some power and shared decision making in school, particularly in curricular, co/extracurricular development and innovation". From this zone, it is clear that ultimately, the "principal has controlling powers within the school who is responsible for either facilitating or stifling teacher leadership" (Grant, 2012, p. 58). From this, I saw that by redistributing power, the principal can enable teacher leadership within the school. As Muslim female teachers within our varied contexts, I needed to unpack how each of us identified with zone two's demands and opportunities.

2.9.7.3 Zone three: Teachers can become more involved in whole school development issues such as vision building and policy development

In Grant's model, participating in whole school development is considered leadership. In zone three, Grant (2012, p. 58) focuses on how "teachers can become more involved in whole school development issues such as vision building and policy development". Within this zone, there are two roles; role five is about organising and leading peer reviews of school practice in one's own school, and includes:

organisational diagnosis (audit-SWOT) and dealing with the change process (school development planning), school-based action research, whole-school evaluation process, formal and informal mediating as well as union representation, school practices such as fundraising, professional development, policy development, staff development initiatives and membership of teams such as School Development Team (SDT).

In my view, all teachers could be involved in whole-school development, but I needed to explore the participants' experiences of these opportunities.

Grant (2012, p. 58) highlights role six within this zone, which is about "participating in school level decision making within one's own school" and involves indicators of leadership such as:

awareness of, and non-partisan to, micro politics of school (working with integrity, trust and transparency), participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership, problem identification and resolution, conflict resolution and communication skills and school-based planning and decision making.

In my view, our involvement in decision making as Muslim female teachers needed to be investigated.

It is clear that if teachers can lead in zones one, two, and three, opportunities for improvement and transformation of schools are possible, as teachers are more involved in school-level activities (Grant, 2012). Thus I understood the need for teachers to make valuable contributions to their professional space and embrace leadership opportunities. I needed to understand how we, as Muslim female teachers implemented improvement, transformation and involvement in the activities highlighted in these zones.

2.9.7.4 Zone four: Teachers can extend themselves beyond the school and lead in community life and cross-school networking

Networking and building collaborative relationships with colleagues from other schools and community members enhance leadership. Grant (2012, p. 59) references zone four, where “teachers can extend themselves beyond the school and lead in community life and cross-school networking”. This zone focuses primarily on across-school activities. It makes reference to role two and concerns itself with the provision of curriculum development knowledge and is indicated by:

being involved in joint curriculum development (core and extra/co-curricular) at learning area meetings, liaising and empowering parents about curriculum issues (e.g., parent meetings, visits, communication-verbal and written), liaising with and empowering the SGB [school governing body] about curriculum issues (e.g., SGB meetings, workshops and training) and networking at circuit, district, region and provincial level through committee or cluster meeting involvement.

Since this involved working with community members and professionals, I needed to explore how this collaboration impacted us as Muslim female teachers and how we embraced such opportunities.

Referring to Grant’s model and our leadership experiences within our professional sphere allowed me to understand ‘how, why, what and when’ we as Muslim female teachers enact leadership at different levels within our schools. These questions need to be investigated together with our collaborative experiences within our professional and personal spaces.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I identified critical contestations around the conceptions of leadership. I began by explaining the terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ and then moved on to various leadership definitions. I focused on context-responsive leadership, which played an instrumental role in my study. I then explained leadership from an Islamic perspective, as my focus in this study was to understand Muslim women’s experiences of enacting leadership. This was followed by a discussion of women and leadership, focusing on female leadership, female Muslim leadership, and feminist leadership. I further moved on to explain the concept of distributed leadership.

Finally, I considered teacher leadership. I concluded by explaining my rationale for using Grant's teacher leadership model and unpacked it to understand teacher leadership in my study.

From the ideas and information presented in this chapter, I saw that Muslim female teachers' personal and professional experiences do not occur in isolation. As I continually engaged with scholarly articles, I noticed that the literature provided multiple leadership perspectives that could help me comprehend Muslim female teachers' experiences. I aimed to use these insights to better understand my Muslim female teacher participants' experiences during the analysis process.

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I focus on the self-study research process. I describe the participants and explain the data generation and analysis processes. I also discuss trustworthiness, ethical issues, problems experienced, and monitoring my own emotions as the researcher and as a participant.

CHAPTER THREE: MY COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

3.1 Introduction

In this study, I aimed to get a better understanding of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. I worked together with three other Muslim female teachers to understand our leadership within our personal and professional spheres. I aimed to contribute new meanings and perspectives for understanding and supporting Muslim female teachers' leadership.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Two, I highlighted critical contestations around the conceptions of leadership. I explained the concept of leadership, and aspects related to leadership, such as women and leadership, female Muslim leadership, and women's leadership. I concluded by explaining the rationale for drawing on Grant's model of teacher leadership.

In this chapter, Chapter Three, I focus on the self-study research process. I aim to give an honest account of this process and the challenges and opportunities that surfaced. I begin by describing the Muslim female teacher participants. I discuss my critical friends and their purpose in this collaborative self-study. I also describe the data generation methods used. I explain the analysis process. I discuss ethics, offering support, the problems of this collaborative self-study, and handling my own emotions as a researcher and research participant.

3.2 The participants

I conducted this collaborative self-study research together with three fellow Muslim female teachers. I knew the participants casually through previous interactions. I knew that they were likely to have a great deal to contribute to my study, as our conversations often focused on leadership, promotion, enacting leadership, management members in our schools, and gender relationships within our private and professional spheres. These participants expressed their initial interest in my proposed research and offered valuable, rich information about their individual experiences. I saw their eagerness as we casually spoke at an informal gathering about our experiences of enacting leadership. I then wrote to each one by email, telling them about my research and asking them for a meeting, first individually and then collectively. Each volunteered to be a participant in this study.

Table 3.1 shows the biographical details of the participants. As explained in Chapter One, I used pseudonyms for each of them, including myself, to respect the other participants' confidentiality and my own. Participants varied in age and post levels. Countessa was a level one teacher (an ordinary teacher), Awesome Annie, a Deputy Principal, Aneesha, a Head of Department (HoD), and Curly Sue, a teacher and special needs teacher.

Table 3.1. Biographical details of participants

Name Pseudonym	Age(years)	Marital status	Position/Rank	Highest Qualification
Curly Sue	+/- 50	Married	Teacher and special needs teacher	PhD
Awesome Annie	+/- 50	Married	Deputy Principal	M.Ed.
Countessa	+/- 30	Married and divorced	Teacher (level 1)	Hons
Aneesha	+/-50	Married	HoD	M.Ed.

All meetings with the participants took place at a venue convenient to them after school or on a Saturday. For each of the data generation sessions, the venues changed because of convenience, safety and time constraints.

3.2.1 Meeting the participants

Setting up the initial collaborative meeting with the participants, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Countessa and Aneesha, was not easy. I recall how frustrated I became as I had to change dates, time and venues; however, I managed to maintain my calmness and put on a fake smile in this renegotiation process. I recall the conversation below in arranging to meet a participant (Figure 3.1).

Hope you having a wonderful Ramadaan. Is it possible for us to meet as a group on Monday 13 July 2015, at 10:00, at the main reception? We can meet for about an hour so that I can start data generation by asking you to think about the first question in the study. I am also attaching the proposal as a read and a start to the purpose and rationale of the study. Your participation in this study is much appreciated. Lots of love

Figure 3.1: Arranging a meeting.

We met for about an hour so that I could explain my research questions and make a start with the data generation. At our initial meeting, I gave them a brief description of myself. We each shared personal information about our families, our children and our professional lives (Mitchell et al., 2019). During the meetings that followed, we had robust discussions of several incidents that transpired and how others within our personal and professional lives impacted us.

Table 3.2. Data generation sessions with participants

Date	Topic	Activity
Session 1	Research participant permission	Permission letters signed
Session 2	Meet and greet participants	Getting to know my participants
Session 3	Negotiating meetings	Planning of the research journey
Session 4	The first meeting to start the research process	Explanation of the topic
Session 5	Story writing process	Participants wrote short stories about their experiences
Session 6	Drawings	Each participant drew something about themselves that was meaningful
Session 7	Discussion	Discussions of stories and drawings took place
Session 8	Collage making	The process of collage making was explained, and the process began

Session 9	Discussion	Participants discussed the collages
Session 10	Letter writing	Participants were asked to write letters to their future self
Session 11	Last meeting	Discussion of possibilities for the future enacting of leadership by Muslim female teachers

3.2.2 Reasons for the anonymity of participants

At our first meeting, I told the participants that I would use pseudonyms to protect their identity. Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 277) state that as researchers, we need to be “mindful and active in protecting our research participants (and ourselves) from harm and undue risks, as well as affording respect for autonomy”. Hence the need for me to give participants pseudonyms. Throughout the research process, all ethical protocols about anonymity, beneficence and non-maleficence were observed (Rule & John, 2011). Pseudonyms were used to anonymise the schools’ names and the participants’ names. Informed consent was obtained from the participants for their involvement in the study. Permission was applied for and granted by the relevant gatekeepers to conduct the research.

As this research was sensitive, I took precautions in safeguarding the wellbeing of my participants. For instance, I continually changed the venues for the group meetings for fear of being watched or followed. Mitchell and Irvine (2008, p. 34) point out that providing “practical and emotional support” is essential for the wellbeing of research participants. I ensured that safety measures in this research were a priority, and I was conscious that the contents of this thesis “must not cause any harm to those being researched and that it must give voice to the voiceless” (Mitchell et al., 2019, p. 187). These voices were of my participants, concerning their experiences within their personal and professional spheres.

I ensured “reflexivity” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 277) as I aimed to get a deeper understanding of Muslim female teachers’ experiences and how these impacted their leadership. I also worked to build a trusting and honest relationship between the participants and myself (Samaras, 2011). I understood that this trust and honesty would allow the participants to communicate their

experiences freely to me. Samaras (2011, p. 191) points out that as researchers, we must not “leave data exposed to the public eye”, and I ensured that even when I was capturing information on my laptop, I always closed it when I was interrupted.

3.2.3 Teaching contexts of the participants

The participants taught in lower and middle-class contexts in a suburb in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Two of the participants worked in the same well-resourced independent school, and the other two taught in different public schools.

Awesome Annie taught in a public school, which comprised pupils from the local, low-income parent population and refugee children. Teaching and learning came with the challenges of poverty and the often distressing experiences of the refugees living in central Durban. Resources in this low-income school were minimal, and the dynamic team of teachers and management continually engaged in fundraising to provide ample resources that encouraged teaching and learning. In this school, the teacher/pupil ratio was 1:55, and the learner population consisted mostly of Black learners. The teaching population was multiracial (Whites, Africans, Indians and Coloureds) and from varied income groups of our multicultural society.

Curly Sue began her novice teaching experience in a public school in Chatsworth, a predominantly Indian suburb in Durban. The school comprised of mostly Indian children who came from the local, low-income parent population. Her classroom had a few resources, but she opted not to spend too much money on resources for fear of them being stolen by some poor learners in the class to buy cigarettes, drugs and alcohol. Teaching and learning were accompanied by the challenges of drugs, gangsterism and poverty. Resources in this low-income school were lacking, and the team of teachers and management also engaged in fundraising to provide additional resources for teaching and learning. This school was instrumental in initiating social-emotional support for the learners. In this school, the teacher-pupil/ratio was 1:30.

Curly Sue later worked in a multicultural, special needs school with smaller classes and specialised resources (testing and remediation instruments) to teach learners with special needs.

The independent school where both Countessa and Aneesha taught served parents and learners from middle-class society. The school was entirely independent and was funded by a Board of Governors. It was a state-of-the-art school with the best resources, including the latest technology

that reinforces teaching and learning. Each classroom had an air-conditioner to enhance a conducive environment for learning. The teacher/pupil ratio was 1:25. The learners were local Muslim children, with a few non-Muslim (Hindu) learners who lived on the same road. The teaching population was multicultural and highly qualified (B. Ed to PhD). This school was a top-performing school in Durban.

This school had the luxury of up-to-date resources such as iPads, Apple TV, Wi-Fi, and televisions, as well as up-to-date computers and air-conditioners in each classroom. The school had separate entrances and playgrounds for boys and girls who had to follow the school's ethos, whereby mixing of the opposite genders was forbidden. This *Pardah* (separation) was compulsory within the classes (from Grade 5 to Grade 12), so there were separate classes for boys and girls. Parents in this school paid high fees (approximately R50 000 per annum), and quality education expectations were high. Parents demanded perfect handwriting, quality of work covered, excellent communication through the message books, and useful resources (books, worksheets and readers).

The school building was designed with clean lines and an abundance of steelwork, resembling an office block. It had beautiful grounds for sports, an indoor AstroTurf pitch for soccer, attractively decorated classrooms, specialist rooms such as a library, a smart room, and science laboratory and an abundance of teacher resource materials that included computer and, iPads and books. This school had a small teacher/pupil ratio of 1:20.

3.2.4 Initial meetings with my participants

In this section, I describe my initial meeting with each participant, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Aneesha and Countessa, to confirm her participation in the study.

3.2.4.1 Curly Sue

Curly Sue was a fair, skinny and well-dressed modern woman. Her hair was curly and was easily noticeable, as she did not wear a hijab (headgear). We met at a coffee shop, and once we were comfortable with each other, we called the waitress to place our order. At first, she was reluctant to order, and then through my insistence, we both put our orders in. We chatted over a cup of delicious, strong-smelling, freshly brewed coffee and a small dunking biscuit. I guess we did not order anything to eat because we were not comfortable as yet. The people around us were all busy

with their own Saturday morning chores, many of them in the hustle and bustle to get things sorted before the midday rush.

This meeting was very fruitful, as we first chatted for about half an hour about each other and our personal and professional selves. We laughed loudly and joked a lot, reflecting on past learning and teaching experiences together with our interactions with other teachers. Some shoppers looked at us, giggling like young girls. We might have seemed strange but did not care how others around us felt about us. We remembered some colleagues fondly from our interactions with them, and others not so fondly as they had ‘rubbed us up the wrong way’ for many reasons that we did not bother to dwell on. Curly Sue’s facial expressions were happy, and so was her voice. After a while, we got down to ‘business’, my research project, and I briefly spoke about our meeting’s purpose. Curly Sue was excited at first, and then had many questions such as:

Do you think I am the right person? I never thought of myself as a leader. Will confidentiality be kept? Can I read the dissertation before submission?

Curly Sue did not realise that she was a leader, and I explained what teacher leadership meant. She felt that she was not in a management position and did not consider herself a leader. The last two questions seem to have worried her a lot, and I tried my best to reassure her. After our discussion, I hoped that I had convinced her and planned how and when we would meet next. She was now looking concerned and more serious, and so was I, as I had to get down to the nitty-gritty of the research.

Curly Sue also asked if she could read the proposal. I reassured her that I would email it to her. I did not send the proposal right away because I felt it was first necessary to check with my supervisors. Having contacted my supervisors by email, I was told that we would further discuss this issue at our next meetings (10 June or 7 July).

We ended this first session cordially as we spoke about meeting dates and how often we would meet and the need to meet to collectively share our teacher leadership experiences as Muslim women. We parted ways amicably. After we each went our way, I sighed a big sigh of relief. I felt as if I had conquered the world, as this initial participant meeting went very well.

3.2.4.2 *Awesome Annie*

My initial meeting with the second participant, Awesome Annie, added some ‘spice’ to this data generation research process. As her name suggests, she is indeed awesome. I chose this name for her as a result of her multitasking. If you spent some time with her as I did, one could call her a superwoman. Awesome Annie best describes her character, energy and abilities in all that she does. From my first meeting with her, I saw her multitasking. She is physically in one place but working on many issues. For example, she was in her office with me when we were interrupted by some exchange students, who she quickly saw to, then carried on with our meeting. Also, as we were busy chatting, she got a call from a family member. She promptly ended her discussion with me and tried to sort out her issues. She also believes very strongly in service to humanity. These attributes have compelled me to call her Awesome Annie, and this unfolds in her story.

Meeting Awesome Annie took a lot of negotiating. I eventually visited her at her school. She had blocked out an hour to chat. This environment reminded me of my school days back in the 1970s when I was growing up. As I walked into the school, I could smell the crisp air around, as it lies near the sea. Many activities occupied the learners. It was a busy school. I presented myself to the friendly receptionist, and to my surprise, I knew some of the staff. They immediately located her. I was welcomed into her busy office, with many things on her desk for immediate attention.

Awesome Annie was a slender, middle-aged woman dressed in full hijab (headgear) and *abaya* (loose-fitting outer garment). She was medium in complexion with an aura of academia around her. I admired her friendly but intellectual disposition.

Piles of books and papers lay on the desk. It looked chaotic, but as I spent more time with her, I realised how organised she was because if she looked for something, she quickly located it. I now saw how lucky I was to get some time with her. Awesome Annie and I chatted idly for about half an hour, speaking about ourselves. We talked at length about our children and her daughter’s forthcoming marriage. I gave her the purpose of the study, and she showed excitement about being involved and being able to make a potentially valuable contribution to the research topic. We ended our meeting as she had to go to another one. I left the first meeting feeling happy with myself and feeling as if I had conquered a mountain.

3.2.4.3 Aneesha

Meeting Aneesha, my third participant, added some indelible episodes of tears and joy. She was a fair, middle-aged, voluptuous woman who dressed in hijab in and out of school. When we met out of school, she dressed in loose-fitting outer garments, not an *abaya*, but wore a hijab. Setting up meeting times with her was not easy, as she was a busy person who juggled the roles of teacher, manager, mother and wife. Aneesha led a hectic and active life. Sometimes the strain of daily occurrences was visible on her face, with dark circles under her eyes and the disappearance of her smile. Our first meeting was at a nearby school at about 15h30, when it was deserted. I could hear my footsteps echo as I walked through the hallway to meet Aneesha at her office, situated on the first floor. The school had strict security, and I had to check-in at the front office, where a friendly secretary met me. She announced my visit to Aneesha and then she led me to Aneesha's office. Then we began to chat casually and I got to know her better.

3.2.4.4 Countessa

Reaching my last research participant, Countessa, was a challenge. We somehow never got our dates or times of meetings correct. She was experiencing some personal issues. However, after much deliberation, I managed to set an appointment with her alone. It would turn out that her story would add a twist to our data generation.

We first spoke casually, as I knew her better than the other participants. She was eager and proud to be a participant and felt that she could make valuable contributions to this study. I explained the process and left feeling happy that a first meeting had been negotiated. She was over the moon to be a participant. I breathed a huge sigh of relief as all participants had been approached, and further collaborative meetings were partially negotiated

3.3 Data generation and meetings with the participants

It was in the month of Ramadaan (the month of fasting from dawn to dusk) when we decided to meet first. This was a great sacrifice as we usually spent any spare time reading the Quran (Holy Muslim Book) and *salaah* (prayers five times per day), which is a stipulated order by Allah (God). Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha met together for the first time. Countessa was not available and sent her apologies. Our meeting was rather rushed and clinical, as each of us was busy with preparations for Eid (religious festival of Muslims after a month of fasting). The word

‘clinical’ is fitting, as we met at a local children’s hospital, in the office of one of the participants who had left teaching to work at a hospital as a child psychologist. However, we got down to the essentials and discussed our first task, which was to respond to my first research question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? In responding to this question, we had to write short stories about critical incidents in our past and present, using memory drawings to best describe our experiences. These stories would be unpacked at our next meeting.

After discussing my data generation methods and showing them evidence of my metaphor drawings, I saw smiles on the participants’ faces. We began chatting about the first research question, and I gave them copies of the first task and told them that this was to be completed by all of us. During our discussions, open-ended questions were asked, as I aimed to “understand informants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives and experiences” (Brenner, 2006, p. 357). We collaboratively worked on a deadline as to when I would collect the stories to have them ready for my supervision meeting with my critical friends. Once I had received this task, I would read their individual stories and plan discussion topics for our next meeting in August.

We ended our session merrily and exchanged pleasantries about our families and about the upcoming festival of Eid ul Fitr. I presented each with a small gift, thanking them for making time for this meeting. I was quite satisfied with this first collaborative self-study participant meeting. Things were now starting to fall into place, and the excitement was building. I could not wait to read their inputs.

3.3.1 Laughter and humour during our meetings

During our discussions in our collaborative self-study data generation meetings, laughter was a key ingredient as we recalled our collective experiences. The authenticity of our recollections of fun memories was reflected in our moments of laughter. The opportunity to laugh helped us to shed some light on our collective experiences. As we looked at the memory drawings of our experiences, we laughed at how we represented each memory work. Looking at some artefacts, such as photographs of our past experiences made us laugh hysterically as we looked at how weird we looked back then. Awesome Annie saw Aneesha’s campus registration card, and was amazed that she had kept this artefact for so long.

Masinga (2012) explains how laughter among participants in her collaborative self-study initially worried her, as she wondered about getting back to the task of data generation. But then, she saw the value of laughter in the research process. This was also the case for me, as we were all caught up in the moment and getting back to our collaborative discussions took some time. Eventually, after a good laugh, we composed ourselves and continued on our journey of data generation.

3.3.2 Choosing pseudonyms for the participants

I emailed the participants asking them to read the descriptions I wrote about their pseudonyms. I asked the participants to read a paragraph about how I described them, hoping to get approval to use the pseudonyms I had given them. We discussed the names at our next meeting, and all were happy with their pseudonyms. In what follows, I describe Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Aneesha and Countessa and explain how I chose their pseudonyms.

3.3.2.1 Curly Sue

Curly Sue is probably the oldest [I did not ask her age] and was the most expressive of my participants. She is always busy and in a hurry. When one first sets eyes on her, her hair looks as if it has been in a tumble dryer, all curly, and she is often seen straightening it in an endeavour to make herself more presentable. Her oriental eyes speak for themselves, passing on an enigmatic vibe that permeates your soul the minute she speaks. Her hurriedness, curly hair, pleasant disposition, and continually being on the move encouraged me to call her Curly Sue. When we meet as a collective, we had a good giggle because we reminded each other of the description and pseudonym I had given her and how fitting it was. Her curly hair probably represents her critical thinking and inquiring mind. Curly Sue's eloquence and abundance of worldly knowledge are reflected in her storytelling.

3.3.2.2 Awesome Annie

As her name suggests, she is indeed awesome. I chose this name for her as a result of her multitasking. If you spent some time with her, as I did, one could call her Superwoman. This name best describes her character, energy and abilities in all that she does. Ever since my first meeting with her, I have seen her multitasking. These attributes compelled me to call her Awesome Annie, and they are seen to unfold in her story.

3.3.2.3 Aneesha

Finding Aneesha, the third participant, was the easiest as we worked with each other and shared a passion for learning. Her intellectual capacity was to be admired, as she demanded perfection in what she did. I could call her an obsessive-compulsive person, as she was clinical in her meetings yet warm in her relationships with parents, colleagues and learners. When she spoke, her eloquence demanded attention. She was admired for her zest in acquiring knowledge, her pastoral care and expressiveness. Hence, I called her Aneesha as she was a symbol of calmness, and emotive and affectionate. To me, she was a woman worth emulating, and this is reflected in her story.

3.3.2.4 Countessa

Her ‘Blood Red’ lipstick adorned lips, and her slender figure in a hijab reflected her regal disposition-hence the name Countessa. Any encounter with her is extraordinary, as she has the gift of the gab and always has a joke to add to the discussion, and her laughter is contagious. Her disposition and energy with people around her are admired, and she wins over people with her friendliness. This regal disposition is evident in the encounters depicted in her story.

3.4 My critical friends

Self-study research also entails collaboration and analytical conversations with peers as critical friends who can offer different perspectives on our lived experience, enabling us as participants to “reframe our thinking as teachers based on new insights” (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 109). Taylor and Coia (2014, p. 12) point out that “collaborators or critical friends help to see beyond the individual or personal worldview and reframe teaching practice”. I envisaged that my critical friends would contribute significantly to this study by giving their feedback.

My critical friends were four of my fellow doctoral students, Roxy, Yasmin, Timmy and Sally. All were doing self-study research. Timmy’s research focused on English for second-language teachers. Sally’s study entailed investigating her leadership practice. Roxy’s research was about her learning as a novice teacher, and Yasmin’s research focused on her position as a subject advisor. Schuck and Russell (2005, p. 120) point out that “face to face” critical friendship can be very satisfying. I identified with this statement, as whenever we met, we were so happy to see each other. These meetings were also comforting as we shared our trials and triumphs. Our supervisors also arranged a writing retreat for us participants to present our proposals.

We met with our research supervisors as a collective monthly, with longer sessions during the school holidays. Later, after our data generation and analysis was mostly complete, we moved to individual contact sessions with our supervisors.

Our collaborative sessions changed from 1 hour initially to about 3 hours per session. The length of our discussions determined the duration of the sessions. We were available daily to chat through our WhatsApp (instant messaging application) group chat (Figure 3.2) created by our supervisors and through email.



Figure 3.2. An example of my critical friends’ chat through WhatsApp.

According to Samaras (2011, p. 281), critical friends are “trusted colleagues” whom we look towards for support and verification, in the hope of gaining renewed interpretation and understanding. This applied to the critical friends in this study, as their support during this research was invaluable. Furthermore, Samaras (2011, p. 11) points out that “critical friends encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to obtain alternative perspectives and work to help and validate the quality and legitimacy of each other’s claim”. From this, I understood that my critical friends were trusted people who asked challenging questions, provided data to be examined through another lens, and offered a critique of a person’s work as a friend. The “friend is an advocate for the success of that work” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). With this in mind, I reflected on some comments from our contact sessions where we discussed the planning of the research process, time for data generation, asking participants for consent, setting up meetings, guidelines for meetings, and recording of data.

Our “self-study community” aimed at enabling us to work “together through their conversation” (Samaras, 2011, p. 99), and this is what we did during our critical friends’ meetings as we engaged in meaningful and purposeful ways. Furthermore, Samaras (2011, p. 73) explains that critical friends “can encourage different views and looking at issues from a different perspective”. With this in mind, I recall how we engaged in discussions about our work plan for that period. Critical friends proved to be invaluable because “learning, thinking and knowing arise through collaboration” and serve as “validators who provide feedback while you are engaged in the research” (Samaras, 2011, pp. 13-14). My critical friends made valuable contributions through our reflection on our experiences.

My critical friends enabled me to look at my own experiences from a different perspective. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 236) highlight that critical friends’ groups give “confidence, collegiality and collaboration”. Our group provided a platform for us to work together, making us feel comfortable and safe. Likewise, Samaras (2011, p. 117) pointed out that critical friends also “encourage, support and collaborate”. My critical friends helped me answer some unanswered questions from my presentations during our group meetings. These included the use of pseudonyms, getting a snapshot (a photograph of our conversations through the WhatsApp groups created), the use of voice recorder, and how to get participants to be co-operative, and engaging participants in data generation activities.

Listening to my critical friends’ stories and presentations also gave me ideas, such as the use of pictures and drawings, WhatsApp and snapshots as evidence for my study. I reflected on how Sally used tweets to gather data from her participants and how Timmy reflected on his group meeting with his participants and how his participants expected him to pay for food and drinks. These reflections about their data generation plagued my mind about whether I would be successful with my own process.

Furthermore, Schuck and Russell (2005, p. 112) highlight that “trust, support, and flexibility” are essential elements of critical friendship. My critical friends offered their honest and constructive feedback during our monthly meetings. Assistance from my critical friends went beyond our monthly meetings, where they provided feedback by giving “alternative views in a constructive manner” (Samaras, 2011, p. 117). My critical friends also helped me understand connections between the research questions and data, which sometimes proved challenging.

My critical friends and I also met without our supervisors during the winter vacation. During this time, we focused on getting technical assistance from the university’s subject librarian. As Samaras (2011, p. 134) points out, critical friends can help by giving ideas about technical aspects relating to research such as “backing-up electronic information, filing and storage of information (electronic and hard copies)”. We also spent precious hours over four days working on our theses. During this time, we were focused. We used the comfort of this context to engage and collaborate. We discussed our studies, such as literature related to our research, referencing, and new ideas relating to the study, which was memorable as it was time well spent.

3.5 Data generation strategies

I used six data generation strategies: journal writing, memory drawings, collage, audio recorded discussions, short stories and letter writing, to address the research questions (Table 3.3). Group discussions took place at the participants’ collaborative meetings, using the memory drawings and short stories as triggers for these discussions.

Table 3.3. Data generation methods

Research Questions	Methods	Data Source
<p>1. What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership?</p> <p>1a) Sub question 1. What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?</p> <p>1b) Sub Question 2: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?</p>	<p>1. We (my three fellow participants and I) used memory drawings to prompt specific stories of past incidents within our personal and professional spheres.</p> <p>2. We wrote stories about critical incidents in our past and present practice of our personal and professional spheres.</p> <p>3. We discussed some of our significant past experiences within our personal and professional spheres.</p>	<p>1. Drawings.</p> <p>2. Written stories</p> <p>3. Audio recorded conversations</p>
<p>2. What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers’ experiences of enacting leadership?</p>	<p>1. We wrote letters to our future selves, explaining what we had learnt and would like to remember about ourselves as</p>	<p>1. Letters</p>

	<p>Muslim female teachers enacting leadership positions</p> <p>2. We held open discussions on how we could enhance Muslim female teachers' leadership and create opportunities to support Muslim female teachers' leadership within the personal and professional spheres.</p>	<p>2. Audio recorded conversations</p>
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3.5.1 Journal writing

Entries were made in our journals (Figure 3.4) as we aimed to record and reflect on our “feelings, interpretations and judgements” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 123) about our past and present experiences of enacting leadership. Each participant was encouraged to keep a journal in the form of a small notebook or on any digital media about their present experiences, as well as reflections on the past. I asked for a daily entry to be recorded in our journals. However, this did not happen as often as I wanted; participants found it time-consuming and so it only took place as the need arose. Journal entries were not easy for participants as they all were preoccupied with their own busy lives; however, it created a sense of awareness of Muslim women enacting leadership. Some posted regularly through WhatsApp (an instant messaging application) about some prominent Muslim women’s achievements. For example, Awesome Annie wrote on WhatsApp: “Hi, has completed her PhD in some studies relating to women” (March 2016).

Journal entries allowed us to do reflection in our quiet moments about Muslim women enacting leadership. Masinga (2013, p. 8) explains that journaling allows for “true thinking”. Journaling enabled us as participants to document that we were battling to express in talking about our experiences.

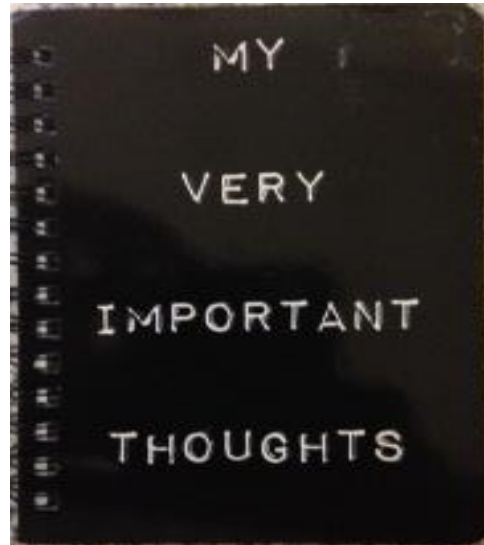


Figure 3.3. My journal.

In her journal, Countessa recalled her childhood years of practising Islam and wearing a headscarf.

When I adorned my headscarf, I didn't always wear it, she would pass comments like 'you gone holy all of a sudden'. I also had comments from my family members who were not Muslims... uncles from my mum's side would often tease us by greeting as...As Salaamu alaikum in a derogatory tone. (April 2016)

Similarly, Aneesha reflected on a conversation held with a senior male manager at the workplace who shares his frustration:

My daughter is a graduate and she is being forced to stay home by her husband... he needs to get his act together. (November 2015)

Aneesha also wrote in her journal as follows:

14 Aug 2014

I made an offer to the principal to be on the Umalusi team, which he first agreed to but later didn't even consider me.

Journal entries allowed us to think deeply in our private moments and reflect on the experiences we faced as Muslim female teachers. Some memories, like Aneesha's were painful. She was disappointed about not being on the school Umalusi (board monitoring teaching and learning standards) team. Likewise, Masinga (2013, p. 35) points out that the "process of reflecting is a difficult one, as we learned to deal with the implications of what was being reflected upon". In this case, it was Aneesha's disappointment that she had to come to accept.

3.5.2 Memory drawing

Memory drawings are used in self-study research "as a method for recollecting, representing, and examining significant lived experiences" (Pithouse, 2011, p. 38). As a result, these drawings reflected our past and present lived experiences. The use of memory drawing was aimed at triggering and capturing untold stories of experiences that might be hard to put into words (Pithouse, 2011).

As a data generation strategy, I asked the participants to represent their past experiences as Muslim women and encouraged them to draw something that represented their memories. I gave minimal prompts or ideas as I wanted it to be original. As participants, each one engaged in drawing to reflect on our lives as Muslim female teachers. In doing so, I hoped "for knowledge generation within our varied research context" (Messenger, 2016, p. 134).

Moorosi (2011, p. 209) points out that memory work is a powerful tool that helps make meaning of life stories and childhood experiences. We all aimed to bring our experiences alive through the medium of drawing. Moorosi (2011, p. 209) also states that memory work helped to 'unlock' past experiences and "break the silence" of what could previously not be spoken. Moreover, these memory drawings allowed us to engage with our personal experiences in a visually captivating manner. We all drew simple images, yet each one has magnetic elements that reflected our past experiences. I refer to the drawing below (Figure 3.4):



Figure 3.4. Aneesha’s drawing of a typical family scene in her home, growing up as a Muslim female.

The above drawing by Aneesha is a memory drawing of her daily life in a typical Muslim home, where females (young and old) were socialised into domestication. When we discussed our drawings, Aneesha recalled how all of the females within her household were given domestic chores and were not given the option of not doing them. Likewise, Awesome Annie represented her relationship with her siblings in her drawing (Figure 3.5):



Figure 3.5. Representation of Awesome Annie’s siblings.

I followed up by asking Awesome Annie by email (Figure 3.6) to give me some input about her drawing:

Hope you are enjoying Ramadaan. I know that this is a stressful time in school, but if you do have some time please email me the first piece of writing you did where you drew a flower that represented your brothers.

Would really appreciate it

Lots of love

Remember me in your duas

Figure 3.6. Email chat asking Awesome Annie for inputs on her drawing.

She responded by saying that the drawing represented the bond between her and her siblings, each one of them making valuable collective contributions to her existence as the only female sibling within her home.

Through memory work, we learnt how to reveal and unearth forgotten memories of our past. These memory drawings contributed to our understanding of the Muslim female teachers we are today. Similarly, Moorosi (2011, p. 211) points out that memory work enabled the “narration of life stories from childhood to the present, of women principals, as well as the impact memories had on their current lives”. Often our memories are marred by incidents of the past. Moorosi (2011, p. 220) further states that these memories could be harmful and could include “poverty, absent mothers and patriarchal experiences”. A negative memory is evident in Aneesha’s story, as she remembers her late mother: *“Spending time with my mum was limited as she had diabetes and suffered from renal failure. I recall those painful days of her illness where she would be ushered to be dialysed. After a few years of battling with her ill health, she succumbed to her illness”*. This painful experience affected Aneesha’s life.

3.5.3 Collage

Collage comes from the French word “*coller*, meaning to stick” (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 266). Furthermore, Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 266) explains that collages could include “found materials which are either natural or made are cut up and pasted”. Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 268) points out that engaging in collage making is an “alternative form of representation” and expression of the way we “see the world”. From this, I envisaged that collage making would enable us to understand our experiences and respond to my research questions. I felt that it would be valuable to express our experiences as Muslim female teachers in this visual form. From this, I was able to get multiple perspectives on our experiences as Muslim female teachers.

My participants and I then decided that we would engage in this collage making project at home (Figure 3.7), as the process was time-consuming and required some quiet time where we could make decisions about the resources that would make up the collage. No examples were given, as we wanted the collages to be original. Each participant had a blank canvas (A3-sized white paper). The collages consisted of images from magazines and some computer-generated images. Each participant engaged in the collage-making process, reflecting the visuals of her leadership experiences.



Figure 3.7. Our collage making process

We embarked on making collages using various materials such as magazines, newspapers, pen, scissors and other resources. As reflected in the images above, the collages consisted of pictures, photographic images, headings and words from newspapers and magazines, together with computer-generated images, that reflected our leadership experiences, emotions and aspirations. Choosing pictures and texts from magazines was a difficult task. Even sticking them on a blank canvas took a lot of planning and organising. Charlie (2016) made mention of how she used digital collage as a means of expressing her experiences and inquiry. Similarly, Curly Sue engaged in a digital collage making process. Awesome Annie, Aneesha and Countessa made collages using pictures and texts from magazines and newspapers.

Our collages represented our personal and professional spheres, allowing us to analyse our experiences within our personal and professional contexts. As reflected above (Figure 3.7), the images were visually stimulating, encouraging us to look critically at the pictures and what they represented. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 167) say that using collage as a research tool allows us to “examine our development as people, teachers and scholars”. This collage making also helped to examine how “our understanding has changed and grown” with time, showing our differences and similarities (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 167). Likewise, Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 269) points out that collage making can “enhance understanding, show poignancy, open avenues for discussion and further reflection and contribute to persuasiveness”. From this, I envisaged how valuable our collages would prove to be in this research as we reflected on the images.

3.5.3.1 Making meaning of our collages

At our next meeting, we revealed our collages and then explained what the images in each reflected. As, Hiralaal, Matebane, and Pithouse-Morgan (2018, p. 298) point out, “portrait presentation and transcriptions and written reflections then became additional sources of data”. This reassured me that engaging in discussion about our collages would offer data on experiences as Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. This process was very therapeutic as it was fun and relaxing. It gave each of us a sense of achievement as it represented our individual experiences. Each participant then wrote a narrative about their collage-making experiences and reflected on their thoughts and feelings in this process. During our discussion, Aneesha gave a detailed explanation of the images in her collage (Figure 3.8). I reflected on a few reasons that she pointed out, which included:

1. Hands - memories of strong cultural and religious beliefs, prayer integral to Muslim families, leadership in the home, school and broader community. Service to humanity, helping hands. Pleading-representation of prayer probably to enable leadership
7. Saying skulls and bones beneath the grass-deep rooted culture and religion, predetermined lifestyle, communal living is impacting on leaders we are today, the impact of prior life experiences. Memories, haunting, emancipating, leave behind, skeletons of the past, patriarchy, barriers to leadership
9. Dad reading to boys and girls- a realisation of empowerment, awakening of lifestyle, equal opportunities, empowerment, leadership in the home, values, identity formation, development of self-esteem, confidence
10. Father with children- uniting, empowerment of boys and girls, leadership for both, support, a combination of, culture, religion, and educational opportunities, pride, glory, affirmation, representative of family values, enabling leadership outside the home, the formation of positive image and role function.



Figure 3.8. Aneesha's collage.

The images that were represented in the collages told stories of the participants that would never be forgotten. They represented a culmination and satisfaction of each person's individual holistic leadership experiences. We learnt how creative our collage making was in showing an emotional understanding of our experiences. We discovered that our collages were helpful in "giving us an emotional, intellectual and holistic sense of each other's experiences" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 156). To illustrate, Awesome Annie wrote this in her journal:

Memories of how I got to where I am made me quite emotional and at the same time quite grateful. It was feeling of being blessed firstly by the Almighty. I have been so fortunate to have such a fantastic family that supported me in my journey. I clearly remember from the time I was a little girl that there was an instinct or desire in me to go out into the world and make a mark or a difference. After creating this collage, it was a feeling of accomplishment - I did it! Despite coming from a conservative background, I was able to become the first female in my family to go to college and get a degree and venture out into the world to make a difference.

3.5.4 Audio recording of sessions

All data generation sessions were recorded using a voice recorder, which proved to be the most useful tool in my data generation process. All sessions were recorded so that I could go back and transcribe them. However, initially, I struggled to operate my voice recorder. I had to seek the help of a computer technician to assist me in using the voice recorder. I also battled to forward, rewind, move to folders, and, more than anything, the batteries were an issue and failed me several times.

According to Masinga (2013, p. 127), recording each session and listening to it was like having a “third ear”. Similarly, I went back several times to the recordings to clarify group discussions, as sometimes I may have missed some relevant information. Listening to my participants’ voices also gave me a deeper understanding of their emotions during our group discussions. I got as much detail as possible about their experiences of enacting leadership as a Muslim woman. Etherington (2007, p. 603) points out that “the researcher’s ability to make meaning of conversations when participants use words such as Ummmm, or Noooo, or sighs between conversations” was critical. Listening to the recordings, and these sounds gave a clear reflection of our emotions.

Furthermore, Haw et al. (1998) point out that it is important to reflect critically on what we hear, how we understand and what we speak, as well the choices we make about the type of voice we use in our collaborative discussions about our experiences as Muslim female teachers. As I went back to listen to the recordings of our conversations, I reflected on how we responded to questions. Relistening to our collaborative stories enabled me to write down questions that I would use to initiate further discussions that needed clarity. For example, I asked about the schools attended, areas they lived in during their early years, and schooling experiences.

Listening to the recordings also me to listen critically to ensure that no one participant or myself dominated the group discussions. It also allowed me as a researcher to listen to how we responded to questions and issues as a collective, such as our vision to live our dreams of enacting leadership as Muslim women.

3.5.5 Story writing

Each one of us wrote stories about our experiences as Muslim female teachers. These experiences started from our earliest memories as little Muslim girls growing up in an extended family, obeying patriarchal rules, culture, and religion.

Jina (2018) points out that story writing helped to deal with hardships as Muslim women, from within the personal sphere of their homes to the more exposed public sphere of the community and the workspace. Ellis (2007, p. 223) states that story writing is a “reflexive attempt to construct meaning in our lives and heal or grow from our pain”. From this, I understood that this story writing process enabled us as participants to reflect upon our experiences of leadership, allowing us to know why things were the way they were and to imagine how they might change.

Story writing also helped to overcome some of the painful memories that surfaced. We started writing by recalling our earliest experiences of growing up in a Muslim household. We then reflected on the stories told by our family members of incidents of early marriage and problems they faced within their personal sphere. We then wrote about our own experiences as Muslim women, as reflected in Aneesha’s story:

Aneesha’s story: A family with many daughters would prioritise early marriage as these daughters were considered a burden and an extra mouth to feed. No prominence was given to female empowerment. Girls in a Muslim family were referred to as visitors. Parents and relatives always told them that they were visitors and would be married someday. Suitors coming to our home to ‘view’ my sisters and cousins, with a marriage proposal, was a usual weekend activity. Many of them were much older than the girls in the family, and the age gap was ignored.

Masinga (2013) highlights that storytelling can be a tool for memory work. Masinga (2013) also states that story writing allows participants to re-experience and reflect on past events’ essential experiences. This story writing process allowed us to reflect on our past leadership experiences as Muslim girls and now women, which brought back many forgotten memories of early socialisation into specific gendered roles like cooking and cleaning. It allowed each one of us to re-experience the past, reflecting on significant experiences of our schooling, family life, patriarchy, early

marriage and lack of empowerment opportunities. I recalled my mother and other women in the family telling us stories such as:

When we were 12 years old, we got married. Some of them married earlier at 10 and only consummated their marriage when they began menstruating.

The story writing was an exciting process, as each of us participants wrote in our own space, in our own home, which allowed us to make meaning of the world we live in and how it impacted us. This provoked our thoughts, moved us away from our comfort zones, and allowed us to write rich, valuable stories about our past experiences as children to our present-day situations of being teacher leaders.

In writing stories, there was always a strong interplay between past experiences and the present. Some stories were long and others short. Each tale had rich data, full of hidden messages about patriarchy and socially constructed stereotypical domestication behaviours and early marriage and leadership. Some included stories told by our sisters, mothers and grandmothers of how they were forced to cook for their families. This was what Aneesha said in her story:

I witnessed my older sisters plucking vegetables, spinach, tubers and other edibles, from our garden to prepare a meal.

We also recalled how our voices were silenced, and Curly Sue appropriately wrote:

our voices were not to be heard

Throughnm45 story writing, we looked more in-depth at misconceptions, biases, prejudices, and inhibitions as Muslim females, unearthing educational messages in understanding our leadership roles as Muslim female teachers. Listening to the stories of the participants allowed us to “discover new knowledge” which was deeply “embedded within our contexts” (Etherington, 2007, p. 599).

3.5.6 Letter writing

At the end of our data generation process, each participant wrote a letter to her future self (included in Chapters Four and Five). Each participant could write these letters in their own space and quiet time. This letter-writing was done in the comfort of their home because it was “both time-consuming and challenging” (Nyholm, Nyström, & Lindström, 2018, p.164). Ball (2009, p. 56) explains that letter writing about experiences could enable people to write “critically and

analytically”. Furthermore, Ball (2009, p. 68) describes that through the means of writing, “thoughts and needs” are discovered, and this provides a “window to provide support”. From my understanding, using letter writing as a tool uncovered ways to support Muslim female teachers’ leadership and pave a way forward for more Muslim women to embrace leadership opportunities within the personal and professional spheres.

Allowing the participants to write letters gave them the freedom to express themselves, especially regarding Muslim female teachers’ leadership. In this process of letter writing, each participant put her thoughts on paper. Similarly, Ciuffetelli Parker (2006) used letter writing as a tool for teachers to reflect their personal literacy experiences and practices, get information about teacher knowledge, and portray their changing identities. I gathered that this letter-writing would enable readers to better understand issues experienced by Muslim female teachers enacting leadership, and possibilities for changing things that proved problematic. As Nyholm et al. (2018, p. 164) point out, “the text in the letters...has the potential to touch the reader and transform the understanding”.

The letters reflected our feelings about Muslim women’s leadership and what we have accomplished. Each letter spoke about our trials and tribulations as Muslim female teachers. Our letters spoke about leading by example, and not being pompous and proud but instead being a role model to other Muslim female teachers.

3.5.7 Group discussions

Group discussions of our memories took place at our collaborative meetings. These discussions were used to generate in-depth dialogue about Muslim female teachers’ experiences and perspectives on enacting leadership. The memory drawings, photographs and short stories were used as triggers for these discussions (Makhanya, 2010). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 125) explained that group discussions are used in self-study research to gather “different perspectives” and to allow “ideas to emerge from conversation”.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation was no easy task, as it required serious thinking and reflecting. In planning how to analyse and interpret the data, I reflected on my research questions. After many

group meetings with participants, I transcribed the data and organised them according to each participant (Samaras, 2011) (Figure 3.10).

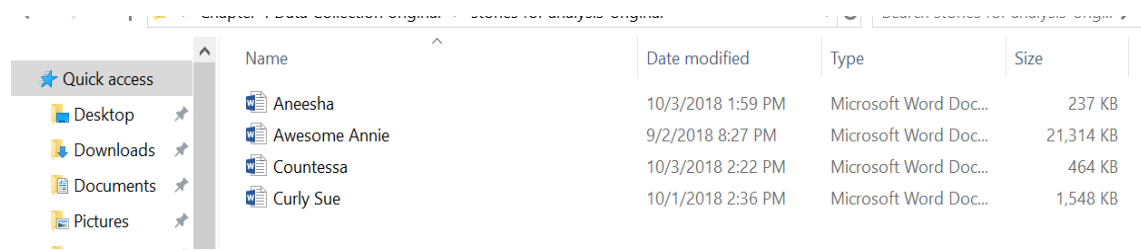


Figure 3.10. Organisation of the data, according to each participant.

Chang (2008, p. 126) points out that data analysis and interpretation is about “shifting our focus” as a researcher from an abundance of data collected to actively “transforming” them into text. To this end, I read and re-read the data (Samaras, 2011). I highlighted common themes that emerged, which would help me to answer the research questions. To get a more in-depth and valuable analysis, I further broke down my first research question into sub-questions 1a and 1b.

Sub-question 1a) What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?

From my discussion with participants about their experiences in their personal sphere, I found common experiences and some in contrast with each other. In doing this, I highlighted key themes that contributed to answering this question (Figure 3.11).

	Curly Sue	Awesome Annie	Countessa	Aneesha
Leadership at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Caregiver to siblings *Income from baking *Leadership in own school as a learner *Dad was a well-read individual who focused on money and taking care of others and this placed huge financial strains on him * The women in our family cooked, cleaned, read religious books (Quran and Hadith), sewed and entertained on a daily basis. *"Finishing school" was right at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregiver to her brothers Income from baking Siblings contributed to leadership Leadership in school, prefect, speeches as a learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income from baking Parents promoted leadership * both my parents worked * mum was a revert (embraced) Islam * dad promoted educating a girl child * went to ex-model C school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siblings contributed to leadership Dad and husband promoted leadership * both my parents worked * first BSC degree (baking, sewing, cooking) was at home. * witnessed my older siblings plucking vegetables, spinach, tubers and other edibles, from our garden to prepare a meal. * My mum, together with my maternal grandmother * Family, friends, colleagues

Figure 3.11. Some of the themes that emerged from data on the personal sphere.

From the notes about my data, I noticed some “themes and patterns” emerge (Samaras, 2011 p. 198). Some of the patterns reflected in my notes about leadership within the personal sphere were domestication, caregiving and patriarchy.

Sub Question 1b): What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?

Engaging with the data about the professional sphere enabled me to keep detailed notes about our experiences. This question was unpacked into different areas, as reflected in Figure 3.13, and included themes and patterns common and different for participants. Some of the themes and patterns include enacting leadership in our classrooms, in school and out of school. These allowed us to deliberate on events that significantly impacted our abilities to enact leadership within the professional sphere.

Leadership within school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Attending workshops *Outreach programmes *Leading and advising learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments * involved in a lot of politics * drama club * I also organised talks for parents and learners. * started a successful Psychology Department at a Durban school for learners with special needs * School councillor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Attending workshops *Outreach programmes. *Leading and advising learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments * I also organised talks for parents and learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending workshops * I also organised talks for parents and learners. *gift of the gab' * co-ordinated swimming * run the after school activities * This year I feel I am on the top of my game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending workshops Leading and advising learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments * I also organised talks for parents and learners. * HIV/AIDS Workshop * Mentor Teacher. * Read for Africa Programme * SDP time tabling committee * School Fun Run * Market Day * Out Door Play Area
Leadership outside school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Mother and wife *love affair" with books * guidance councillor and part time lecturer * I initiated a lot of clubs such as a float procession and TADA (teenagers against drugs and Alcohol) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mother and wife *serve the less fortunate *present school has a student population that comprises of AIDS orphans, foreign learners, street children and many other learners who come from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mother and wife * co-ordinator of the schools Debs ball *first Aid Officer *baking as a career *gift of the gab' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mother and wife * Annual Women's Leadership Conference * Pre-School visits to Al-Falaah College * Whole School evaluation * attended a local University

Figure 3.12. Some of the themes that emerged from data on the professional sphere.

I colour-coded the various ideas using different coloured paper. According to Samaras (2011, p. 200), this technique is “old fashioned but valuable as this we can move the different coloured sticky note paper around as we read and reread data”. This is reflected in Figures 3.13 and 3.14, as I used coloured paper to help me look for themes and patterns, which I later analysed.



Figure 3.13. Data analysis process using different coloured paper for themes.



Figure 3.14. Colour-coding of data.

I hoped that the colour coding would help me to get a better understanding and make meaning of data. The different coloured paper represented the experiences of various participants.

The research questions, together with the sub-questions mentioned above, continually guided the analysis process, enabling me always to talk back to the questions as I read and re-read the captured data. I used the data to make connections between participants and their stories (Samaras, 2011).

3.7 Trustworthiness

In this collaborative self-study, trustworthiness was of the utmost importance. Nieuwenhuis (2010, p. 6) points out that trustworthiness is the “acid test” of the research process. Therefore, in keeping with the principles for establishing trustworthiness in self-study research, I gave clear and detailed explanations of which data sources were used and how data were generated, represented and analysed (Feldman, 2003). I also provided evidence of how my educational understanding has been enhanced through the study (Feldman, 2003) and how I plan to use this understanding to better support Muslim female teachers enacting leadership.

In this self-study, I used multiple methods to understand what was being studied (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). These methods included mind mapping (Figure 3.15) colour coding and computer tabling. I continually engaged in keeping notes throughout the self-study process, which enabled me to account for my decisions during the research process. My decision-making is presented in detail in this chapter.

Teacher leadership mind-map

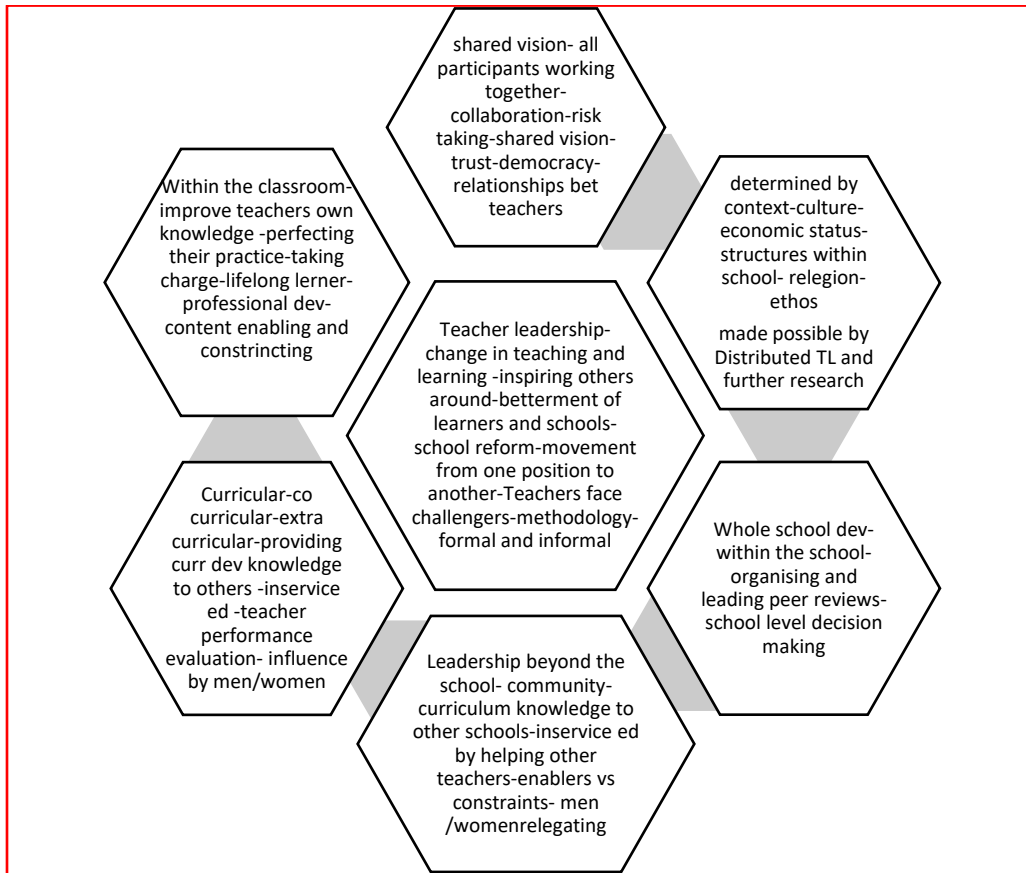


Figure 3.15. Teacher leadership mind-map.

I ensured that the information I transcribed from the data gathering was truthful and that I shared my transcriptions with the participants for them to verify. This reassured the participants, as it allowed them to read their inputs and verify the validity of what I recorded from our data generation sessions. In this way, “accuracy in collecting, analyzing and reporting” was safeguarded (Samaras, 2011, p. 151). This verification process was aimed at making the participants feel at ease with what was transcribed. Allowing the participants to verify and adjust the data captured made this research process more trustworthy, thereby making it possible for those “traditionally silenced to have a voice in educational matters” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 847).

Participants also had an opportunity to read and give input on the narratives I had constructed about their experiences before I finalised the thesis to be comfortable with their representation. LaBoskey

(2004, p. 847) points out that “validity or truthfulness of the data as a mutual process by the researcher and those studied” is important. I took great “care in writing about my research, with my words and taking a compassionate approach in the ways in which I reflect on the words of others” (Helps, 2017, p. 361). I had to pay careful attention to the way I represented the participants and their experiences and viewpoints. I had to ensure that when the thesis was made public, their family members and others would not be identifiable (Samaras, 2011). I also confirmed that no sensitive data about the participants’ families were disclosed in the narratives (Samaras, 2011). I felt the need to protect the participants and their families (Samaras, 2011).

I also sought my critical friends’ perspectives, gaining diverse viewpoints from these teacher-researchers (Samaras, 2011). Samaras (2011, p. 216) states that allowing critical friends to “critique, openness of views and ask questions” makes the research process more transparent. LaBoskey (2004, p. 860) highlights that “making available our work to our professional community for deliberation, further testing, and judgement” is essential. Feldman (2033, p. 27) further argues that the “validity of self-study is to include others in all facets of the research process”. Hence the input from participants and critical friends strengthened the authenticity of this collaborative self-study.

Feldman (2003, p. 27) points out that part of establishing trustworthiness in self-study involves having a “direct influence on teachers, students, schools and policymakers”. As a doctoral student, I was able to extend my influence by participating in the international symposium “Not just an object”: Making meaning of and from everyday objects in educational research’, which took place in Durban, South Africa. At this symposium, I had the privilege of working with the esteemed academics Claudia Mitchell (McGill University, Canada) and Kate Pahl (Sheffield University, UK), together with a group of more than 30 critical friends (teachers, scholars and postgraduate students). At this symposium, we engaged with objects and what they meant to us.

Our collaborative engagement during this symposium allowed us to peer critique our choice of objects and images used. From this, I realised how important our peer discussions were, as each of us strove for clarity about making meaning of our objects. We were asked to exhibit posters, paying careful attention to the aspects of making posters. My poster showed one of the objects which I used (Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16. Poster-making object.

We were also given time to view the other exhibits, where reasons for placing images were discussed collaboratively. We peer-reviewed our displays and engaged in robust conversations about our pictures. My critical friends and I looked critically at this image of mine. For me, it represented my research process and how I engaged in continued re-professionalisation. My critical friends gave inputs and made me reconsider that this image could mean emancipation as a Muslim woman, as I was exposed to the broader world by using technology. During this symposium, I also attended the book launch of *Academic Autoethnographies* written by my two supervisors, Professor Naicker and Professor Pithouse-Morgan, together with Professor Pillay.

As a consequence of participating in the symposium, I wrote a co-authored book chapter titled: 'From a Crutch to a Bus: Learning about Educational Leadership Research and Practice through Referencing and Mapping of Objects' (Figure 3.17).



Figure 3.17. Contributing to a book chapter.

During this writing process, some fellow students (other chapter contributors), my supervisor and I worked collaboratively to write parts of the chapter (Figure 3.17). My fellow students and I wrote about our learning and using objects in educational leadership research and practice. In my piece, I shared some of what I was learning from my doctoral study. This chapter was peer-reviewed by independent scholars.

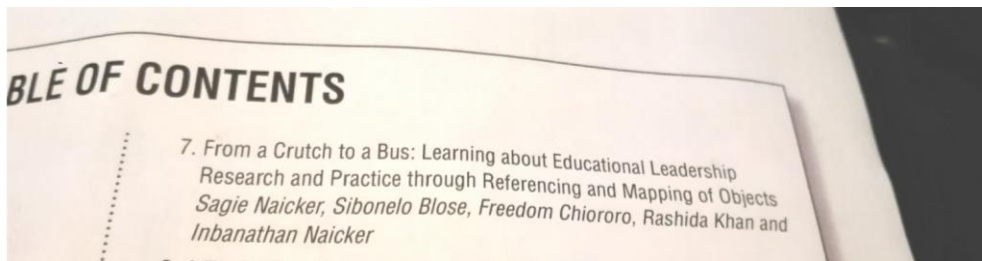


Figure 3.18. Chapter authors.

During this chapter writing process, we shared our inputs, and as critical friends, we discussed and critiqued what each object (such as photographs and drawings) meant to us during our research process. Being able to reflect collaboratively on our choice of items allowed us to get multiple perspectives. In my narrative, I wrote about ‘Inspiring leadership values of sharing, caring and

hard work' (Pillay, Pithouse-Morgan, & Naicker, 2017, p. 106). Eventually, this write-up made up part of Chapter 7 of the book published in 2017. In this way, I made public part of my research discoveries before completing my thesis.

3.8 Ethical issues

As a Muslim, I considered the ethics in Islamic teachings that are pointed out in the Quran (Chapter 3, verse 110), which states, "you are the best of the nations raised up for the benefit of men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong". From this, I understood that I had to practice the ethics that are part of my belief to ensure that the participants' welfare and all others associated with them were protected. No gatekeepers' letters were required by the Research Ethics Committee as all meetings took place outside of school premises and outside of school hours. This was necessary to protect the participants' identities.

After receiving my ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, I contacted the participants about being part of this research. I first approached them through an email dated 5 December 2012. Participants were made aware that they had no obligation to participate and could withdraw at any time during the research process.

This study focused on Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. As a collaborative self-study researcher, it was essential to develop a deep awareness of ethical responsibility towards my participants (Samaras, 2011). I always used pseudonyms when I shared and represented the data. Even my critical friends did not know my participants' true identities, as I always used pseudonyms in our meetings (Samaras, 2011).

This research involved memory work. Therefore, extra precautions had to be taken to ensure the participants' well-being, as they were asked to recall experiences that could have been traumatic. This is closely linked to relational ethics, which focuses on emotions (Ellis, 2007). I understood that I needed to ensure that the participants' social and emotional well-being was taken care of. As a researcher, I had to ensure that my participants faced no embarrassment, shame or anxiety as they relived their experiences. I endeavoured to make sure that our data generation meetings took place in a serene environment and that when I asked questions of the participants, I did not sound harsh or intrusive. For example, questions I asked included:

What are the effects of your Muslim culture on your leadership opportunities?

Speak about or discuss your childhood experiences. What did it feel like growing up as a Muslim child?

Despite my best efforts, recalling events was sometimes painful, ranging from days of struggling to be educated or applying for leadership positions and being turned down. Also, the ‘mind games’ of enacting leadership were emotional. As a result, I consulted a social worker who worked in a nearby school and who specialises in family-related issues, to assist if the need arose. I also asked for the assistance of the Jamiat (a Muslim non-governmental organisation (NGO) that helps with marriage counselling), a motivational speaker who focuses on marriage and abuse, and SANZAF (the South African Zakah Fund, an NGO body) which provides interventions at all levels. I knew people who worked in these places and explained to them that I might need their help. However, through the grace of Allah I did not need to use them. Knowing that help was at hand to offer advice made us feel more comfortable to speak about painful memories. We felt reassured, and our discussions’ supportive tone seems to help lessen the pain experienced. Our collaborative discussions went well, and no one requested the services of a counsellor. As a researcher, I realised that “we do not often make time to go back to find out how have we impacted on the lives of people who became part of our studies” (Mitchell et al., 2019, p. 181). From this, I learnt that if the participants experienced some emotional issues during this research process, I needed to go back to my participants and check their emotional well-being. Thankfully no problems arose.

3.9 Challenges

Throughout this research journey, I grappled with my feelings, as our stories were emotional as we recalled our past experiences. Mitchell and Irvine (2008, p. 35) point out that “managing one’s own emotions as researcher” is very important. This was true, as I often got emotional when I remembered experiences and listened to others’ experiences. Likewise, Aneesha expressed how passionate she got when she read a book about a Muslim girl’s struggle for education:

Aneesha: I began to read stories of great Muslim women like Malala Yousafzai, who spoke about her difficulties in wanting to be educated as a Muslim female (Yousafzai, 2014). I was gripped with Yousafzai’s (2014) story that I could not help but cry. I became emotional when I read how Malala Yousafzai was shot on the school bus, on her way to school, and how she fought death and emancipated herself, eventually being educated.

We all began to read articles and books about Muslim girls and women and their struggles within their personal and professional spheres. We identified with them through our own stories. We shed a tear or two, especially when we described our struggles as young girls and women (as narrated in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis).

I was sometimes overwhelmed by sadness, but I had to continue discussing our experiences within our personal lives. Analysing and writing about our stories helped me work through my emotions, which became overpowering at some stages.

Additionally, as a researcher, I had to be very flexible with questions and activities that I had planned. Austin and Senese (2004) explained that bending over backward in being flexible to suit participants' needs was a continuous lesson. As a researcher, I found that as I often had to give in to changes in venues and dates for our collaborative participant meetings. As the research continued, I realised that being 'flexible' was essential in this research journey, as I needed to accommodate my participants' needs.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter gave a detailed account of my research journey to understand Muslim female teachers' leadership. In writing this chapter, I aimed to provide a thorough and frank report of my research process with its problems and opportunities as an exemplar for others.

The chapter details the careful process of a collaborative self-study with a vulnerable group of Muslim female teachers. Creating a caring and trusting atmosphere was vital to the research process, as the participants needed to feel protected and that sharing their personal experiences would be confidential. This research necessitated revealing private experiences. Therefore, I needed to safeguard that the participants felt relaxed and calm and that I did not oblige them to reveal hurtful experiences. The use of enjoyable, hands-on data generation practices helped participants feel comfortable expressing their lived experiences. As an insider researcher, my understanding and patience assisted the data generation. I developed bonds with the participants in a way that an outsider researcher might not have been able to. I believe that this gave the participants a feeling of belonging and the ability to feel some ownership of the research process.

In the next chapter, Chapter Four, I respond to my first research question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? I represent stories of past experiences from the earliest memories to the present day. I use the detailed accounts of two participants, Curly Sue and Awesome Annie, who taught at public schools, to illustrate their leadership-related experiences in the personal and professional spheres.

CHAPTER FOUR: MUSLIM FEMALE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF ENACTING LEADERSHIP: CURLY SUE AND AWESOME ANNIE

4.1 Introduction

In this study, I aimed at understanding Muslim female teacher leadership. In Chapter Three, I portrayed the journey of my collaborative self-study research process. I described my participants, as well as my data generation and analysis process. I further discussed trustworthiness and ethical issues. I also portrayed the challenges, opportunities and feelings I experienced as a researcher.

In this chapter, Chapter Four, I respond to my first research question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? In answering this question, I present the narratives of the first two Muslim female teacher participants, Curly Sue and Awesome Annie. I constructed these narratives from data generated through the participants' written stories, collages, memory drawings, letters, and audio recordings of discussions. Both Curly Sue and Awesome Annie began their teaching careers in public school contexts. I start with Curly Sue, then move on to Awesome Annie.

4.2 I am Curly Sue, and this is my indelible Story

The following narrative recounts Curly Sue's experiences of growing up in the Casbah, living with extended family members and her relationship with them, domestic socialisation, the impact of politics and apartheid, early teaching experiences, marriage and leadership.

4.2.1 Early years in the Casbah

My roots come from the flower power generation, where I lived in the bustling Casbah, a densely populated area in the heart of the city populated mostly by Indians of Durban. I lived with aunts, who either were spinsters or returned home from failed marriages. There always brewed some conflict within our extended families. Living in a joint family home forced me to share responsibilities and resources. We shared resources in every possible way. When speaking about resources, I reflect on the hand-me-down items of clothing from older siblings and cousins. I also remember how all the children in our family slept in the same room, wherever there was space available. I grew up in a divided, discriminatory society.

I came from a culturally rich society, and within my Muslim community, there was a divide between Urdu, Memon, Gujarati, and Surti (different Muslim sects). This differentiation between the various sects played out in the classroom in subtle ways, such as friendships, favouritism with teachers, because they (other learners who belonged to the Memon, Gujarati and Surti sects) were fairer in complexion and had a higher financial status. It didn't influence me in any way; however, I was very aware of this division. These cultural experiences influenced my racial politics and formed the vibrant Muslim community, with a unique lifestyle, around me. From my early schooling, I remember how the different 'sects' looked down upon the other, each striving for superiority in every possible way. This discrimination between the sects hugely affected me in that it contributed to my major decisions in my life.

4.2.2 *Abu* (my father), a victim of his time

I spent my childhood in a female-majority household of an extended family system, but unquestionably a kingdom defined by patriarchy. My father was the only adult male; whose word was law. We dared not question it, and we were not encouraged to do so. I was always seen as a rebel. Male relatives, such as uncles, relegated and dictated how we dressed and behaved, especially our voices, which were not to be heard. We were forced to wear a hijab to not reveal our body parts; however, we were not forced to cover our hair. I grew up to believe that women did not have ideas, except in the kitchen; men read the daily newspaper, did the thinking, discussed politics and world affairs, and were the breadwinners.

My father was a very hardworking man, a victim of his time. He had a hard life and wanted more for us in life. He wanted us to be liberated, but societal expectations were something else. Money was a huge problem for us as we lived in an extended family. The demands of living within an extended family were financially draining. Dad was a well-read individual who focused on money and taking care of others, which placed enormous financial strains on him regarding providing and educating us (me). I enjoyed every moment with him and also dedicated my PhD to him.

4.2.3 *Ummi, Ma, Kala, Masi, Phuphie, Nanie, Dadi* (names given to the females in my home)

Our roles were clearly defined. My Dadi (grandmother), half a dozen *Kalas* and *Phuphies* (aunts), and female cousins knew their place in our extended family living context. The women in our family cooked, cleaned, read the Quran and hadith (religious books), sewed and entertained daily.

Our rotis (Indian flatbread) had to be a perfect circle, samoosas perfect triangles, the Kitka bread twisted into elegant plaits. My Math Geometry and Algebra lessons began in the kitchen! Like many Muslim girls of my generation, I was schooled to assume the many roles of a homemaker: ‘finishing school’ was right at home. I recall my experiences with our parents and visualise my mum and other adult females in our home. Joint family responsibility was common in my Muslim household, and there were different role functions for men and women. Women were to be in the kitchen. My mother ran a home industry, and she cooked to earn money. She never had fun; she was my hero. I cut onions and potatoes for my mum and could fill samosas (Indian pastry filled with meat or vegetables) in record time. I was called ‘Samosa Sputnik’. I always felt the need to prove myself. Domesticity was imbued in me.

4.2.4 Teenager, apartheid and politics

While attending high school in central Durban, my *Dadi* (grandmother), the matriarch, made it abundantly clear that regardless of whether any of us girls in the family would pursue professional careers (doctor, lawyer or teacher these were the three options back in the day), our priorities would remain the kitchen, a husband, children and his family.

I attended a girls-only school in the heart of the Casbah and wore the obligatory school uniform. There were not too many leadership opportunities at school. I only assisted in some activities. At school, I was only a prefect but shied away from activities that required leadership. At school, I did not initiate any activities. My teachers were the driving force. They were motivated by a desire to be outstanding in South Africa’s deepest, darkest days of apartheid rule and drove us to achieve in an unequal society. They were leaders of note. We had to be well-read, we had to be polished speakers, and we had to prove our mettle in White South Africa. Despite that, we felt inferior- a feeling and belief system that was hard to shake.

As soon as any girl got to high school, marriage prospects became a reality. Should a suitable boy come knocking at your door, studies had to be shelved, not even placed on the back burner. I resisted, growing up in the heady days of Baby Boomer generation older cousins and South African politics; I was fuelled by the inspirational ideas of change. Many things influenced and shaped my life story, which was undoubtedly going to impact the positions I assumed in my career path. It has been a thorny journey to free myself of the shackles that have restricted my thinking, to fully realise the person I am and what I am capable of doing.

Some women in our extended family (my mother and some younger aunts) secretly encouraged us silently by admiration of the growing number of women in the community who were pursuing professional roles. *Ummi* (mother), who was not lettered in English, would not have understood what a PhD was all about, except that it was the height of academic education, and encouraged me to pursue it. In so many ways by mother reminded me of what Alice Walker described in *The Colour Purple* a [novel that won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and focusses on the life of African-American women in the Southern United States in the 1930s, addressing numerous issues including their exceedingly low position in American social culture]: “They were women from my mama’s generation, husky of voice, stout of step, how they battered down doors and ironed white shirts... to discover books, desks, a place for us. How they knew what we must know, without knowing a page of it themselves” (Walker, 1982, p. 89).

I was drawn to political activities and was always drawn to the political movements on campus. I was part of the committees but was not a leader. I got involved in the political agenda on campus, but I was not a political organisation leader because I was limited by gender. It never occurred to me that I, being a Muslim female, I could be a leader. I felt it was my own family that put these limitations upon me. Religion and culture always placed boundaries about decisions I took as a Muslim women teacher. I stayed away from certain activities and didn’t feel the need to get involved. I never thought I could be a leader because of my family’s role in my gendered socialisation. Other friends took on positions, but I remained on the outside as an observer and onlooker. I was not only limited by gender, but by cultural and religious impositions. I was best friends with many student activists, but my family’s socialisation prevented me from taking on any leadership positions. I always remained on the outside.

4.2.5 Being taught in a madrassa (Muslim religious school) and my attitude towards education

This upbringing as the ‘silent gender’ influenced my views on my ability and self-belief that were on shaky ground. The male-dominated Muslim home’s ambiguities were many, but most striking was the attitude toward women and education. At madrassa, we were taught a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that the seeking of knowledge is for every Muslim male or female. When we attended a madrassa, we dressed in loose-fitting garments, most of the time a black *abaya* (loose outer clothing) and a headscarf, as this was our ‘uniform’ for madrassa. In madrassa, the teachings

of the Quran were instilled in us. We spent about two hours a day in madrassa and studied *Suras* (chapters of the Quran), *Duas* (an act of supplication) and *Fiqh* (Islamic law). The Muslim men in our home relegated this role of prayer to domestic affairs. This attitude significantly shaped perceptions about leadership, a belief that becomes so embedded that it becomes a life-defining and limiting thinking pattern.

Yet, my experiences liberated me. I call this a liberating experience because these experiences made me goal-orientated. I wanted an ideal life as a modern-day Muslim woman, a family and an education to free me from the circles of social and cultural impositions. As a young Muslim woman, I had a 'love affair' with books, and I travelled the world through reading these books.

4.2.6 My passion as a novice teacher in the heart of Chatsworth

I taught in a school in the heart of Chatsworth, an Indian suburb in Durban. This suburb was home to the poorest of the Indian community. Drugs, gangsterism and alcohol were rife in this impoverished community. For children coming from this community, life was difficult as they challenged their homes' economic climate. For my students, coming to school was like coming to a safe 'haven'. In my early years as a teacher, life was very different as I got involved in politics. My classroom had a few resources, and I opted not to spend too much money on resources. I feared these being stolen by some of the disadvantaged learners to buy cigarettes, drugs and alcohol; however, as I was very artistic, I spent time making resources to enhance the learners' English skills. I made flashcards, sentence strips and work cards, which I used to reinforce their language and reading skills. I didn't care about the pictures used in my charts and resources, as my school did not subscribe to a particular religious' ethos.

There were 40 children in my class, and I worked hard to develop a close relationship with my learners, often having them confide in me. I focused a lot on their discipline as I wanted to show them a life free from society's ills. I made many changes in school, like starting a drama club. I felt that getting the children involved in drama would enhance their English skills as I was concerned about their poor communication skills. I also wanted to take them out of their sorrows caused by the ills of their community. During the English lessons, I focused on poetry and plays, which was the norm in all schools. I didn't bother to ensure that the words, pictures and stories be Islamically tolerant as I taught a multicultural group of learners. My passion for Psychology superseded all my other ambitions, as I felt the need to help these children. At one stage, my

principal asked me to fill in for him in a management position, and my first thoughts were of what others would think of me, as I still was new. He acknowledged my potential.

At school, I dressed wearing the school uniform (consisting of a white dress and white pants) and never really bothered to cover my head with a headscarf. Mum and dad always worried about my safety; I remember their voices, saying, “Just go there and do your work and nothing else, be careful”.

4.2.7 My world, family and leadership

Having a family, husband, and children was a priority because of my gendered socialisation by my own family. If I took on this leadership role, I would always have to choose between my family and the demands of my position. There was still the conflict between taking on a leadership role and conflicting demands of family responsibility. I wasn't going to take on the Head of Department position because I would always have to do more, which involved more time being spent at school. My interest was not to be a manager in school and be stuck with an office job.

There were interreligious factors that were limiting on leadership opportunities as a teacher. Most leadership-specific promotions were only earmarked for the majority (other cultural and religious groups), and as Muslim female teachers, we were the minority.

Initially, I shied away from leadership positions. There was always this conflict on leadership opportunities that came my way. I took on many leadership roles within my professional capacities, such as guidance counsellor and part-time lecturer. In school, I initiated many clubs such as a float procession and TADA (teenagers against drugs and alcohol) Group. This programme educated the learners in my school about substance abuse and its impact on their lives, aiming to discourage the learners from this deprived and crowded Indian area. I implemented many changes in the years spent at the Chatsworth School. I also organised talks for parents and learners.

In my present, multicultural, special needs school, I have many specialised resources (testing and remediation instruments), which I share with colleagues. This sharing of resources makes it very difficult to use the resources for a significant amount of time, impacting the delivery of lessons and independent teaching, which learners with special needs require regularly. This school has smaller classes with specialised resources that help teach learners with special needs; however, I experienced huge problems with learners' behaviours. Many students with disabilities got

frustrated with school because of not understanding curriculum material or dealing with their emotions, which were not within their control.

I started a successful Psychology Department at this school for learners with special needs. This itself was leadership for me, as it allowed other teachers and myself to assist these learners. This context was more demanding as it only catered to learners with special needs, so all teaching and learning had to be carefully planned to suit them. Despite my many accolades and leadership opportunities, I faced many obstacles from intercultural and religious groups as well as from people of my religious faith. To this day, I continue to face opposition from other race groups for the many leadership positions I hope to vie for.

As a school counsellor, I had experienced leadership within this portfolio. I set up support groups and was the only Muslim teacher wherever I taught. Others around me respected me, and my personal and professional needs were always taken care of. As a Muslim female teacher leader, I have educated many people and therefore was respected as a Muslim. Most of my leadership opportunities as a Muslim women teacher were liberating and unforgettable experiences.

I played a different role in my special needs school because of the race group. There was a lot of competition and envy from our own kind (other Muslim women). I always got referrals from other schools but not from many Muslim schools. I struggled with this because they always wanted to take from you rather than give back something or support you in your endeavours. Different racial groups were more affirming; they always said, "I am so happy for you, well done, congratulations!".

In my endeavour to enact leadership, I was limited by racial and interreligious groups, apartheid and our new democracy, my religious group. Presently, it seems that my leadership positions are now defined by race and not religion. Currently, I am working with different needs, which is not even considered for anything that happens in my working environment. I have now started to present workshops to teachers who need help identifying learners with special educational needs, such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy and attention deficit disorders. Many schools ask for assistance at staff development workshops or individualised aid.

religion and identity in trying to craft a place in an uncertain time in history. The single words and phrases selected reflected who I was and all that directed me and would direct me in the future. It was a great affirmation that mostly I have been true to myself as I have meandered through the milestones, triumphs and pitfalls in my life. I discovered a sense of integrity that defines me. It is this definition that creates the leader in me.

This collage represents my past from 1982. It encapsulates my studies and the leadership roles I encountered. To lead and make a change in the lives of Muslim woman teachers. Life is still beautiful and integrates many things, which culminated into the Muslim woman I am at the present moment. A transition between the political structure of South Africa at a crossroads and my career as a Muslim female teacher happened.

4.2.8.1 Emotions about my leadership experiences as represented in my collage

Being a parent was my first step towards handling leadership. The confidence gained, the decision-making and choices faced were empowering tools in my growth towards assuming the responsibilities integral to leadership. Having emerged from a patriarchal family to creating a family with a very liberal-thinking spouse at my side were the catalyst in my growth. My collage bears testimony to the value I place on parenting as a remarkable leadership role. It is no surprise that in my work as a child psychologist, parenting plays a primary role.

My birth position has naturally endowed me with the power of leadership! As the firstborn of six siblings, I have had to take the lead and responsibility in many situations. Sibling relationships have certainly provided me with the tools for negotiating, compromising, accountability and setting trends.

This sense of getting on with things when given a task, informed by the above, has been a quality that I found to be a driving force in me that “makes things happen”. The “responsibility” factor was the key to carving management roles and creating positions where none existed. My creative part always surfaced in bringing new insights to a position occupied, thus turning a job into a passionate affair and overcoming race and gender barriers.

4.2.9 Future Muslim woman enacting leadership

With a great deal of conviction, I would support and encourage Muslim women to welcome leadership roles. These roles must be defined by themselves and not determined by their male counterparts (brothers, husbands, father and uncles, and religious leaders). They should look at the world through their own eyes, rather than the glasses prescribed and interpreted by their male counterparts.

Muslim women do not often look at the world critically enough for fear of being reprimanded by the wider Muslim society. They must develop the confidence to speak and act freely. Living up to stereotypes has been a very limiting factor in the emancipation of women in leadership roles. In staffrooms, it is not uncommon to see women teachers happily serve male staff, continuing the role function defined in their homes and families. While the family is a priority, it has often been the reason to reject leadership roles. This must be relooked at in terms of shared responsibilities, to provide women with the flexibility and reassurance to pursue their goals with support rather than restrictions. Unfortunately, centuries of male dominance have created the belief that women are not incapable of making decisions and bringing about significant change at many levels. Feeling threatened by male superiority is a considerable barrier in committing to leadership positions.

4.2.10 A Letter to my Future Self

Title: A letter to my future self.

10 February 2016

Preamble

Entrapped in my limitations of all the decades of self-doubt about my perceived lack of leadership skills, my hopes, my achievements and my many capabilities and skills accrued over the decades, I declare that I am going to trust and commit myself fully to embrace the responsibility of enacting leadership positions as a Muslim woman. So, when I look back ten years from now, you are going to see a different me.

Dearly beloved Future Me.

It is ten years on, and I look back at the declaration I made on the 10th of February 2016, after a process of peer interactions with the PhD research group, to contributing with confidence to leadership positions as a Muslim woman.

I look back at the younger me, so afraid to stand up to male and, more frequently in later years, female authority, so doubtful on making meaningful contributions in leadership positions, so insecure about implementing what I have learnt and to use it confidently, so limited by self-imposed definitions of my perceived lack of abilities and competencies in my professional and personal life, to such an extent that I let people far less competent take over, which often left me feeling dissatisfied, unfulfilled and regretful.

It is now with a warmly satisfying feeling that I look back and reflect on the changes that I made. I am looking at you from atop and see how you have grown into a confident woman with a voice that is heard and optimistic about leading and serving. As you may recall, I am passionate about servant leadership.

I am kinder and trust myself and my abilities and the decades of wisdom, both personal and professional, that I have accrued over the years. My first step was to acknowledge my incredible worth and care less about my shortcomings, and to focus on my wealth of knowledge and experience in my work situations. I have had to continually remind myself that I am no less than others because of my gender and now my age.

One of the many challenges I negotiated was dealing with the intersection where family and work crossed. With the children all grown, I gracefully allowed myself to spend more time to do the things that mattered to me in my professional role. The upside was that everyone benefitted from the shift of focus.

I always reminded myself that every time I err on the side of doubt, I am doing a disservice not only to myself but the community I serve at large. I boldly made legitimate demands to be recognised and taken seriously in my professional capacity. I have a voice, and that voice must be heard and respected as long as it does not infringe on anyone's rights.

I continued to develop my internal and external resources, which I believe defines my uniqueness. It is this uniqueness that bears my trademark. It is what makes me shine above the rest. These resources are continually cultivated, and I salute all those that have contributed to my knowledge base. Leadership based on a sound knowledge of yourself and knowledge about your work is what I am learning about all the time to serve those that I work with, be it parenting adult children, managing a practice, or making decisions about casework or leading a small department. This area of my life grows my confidence as much as a plant finds the sunshine and leans towards it despite the obstacles. Remember how I always noticed how that plant standing away from the window still twists and turns to the sunlight. No matter how I forced it with tape and clips to stand in the direction I wanted it, it chose a position which suited it best. So I am growing like that plant to forge a path that gives me comfort and feeds my inner being.

I always thought that leadership would be a legitimised position, categories and positions determined by the powers that be. Some of these would include jobs such as HoD, Principal, CEO, and the like. Thankfully I have learnt on this research journey that leadership positions are way more encompassing than classically defined ones. I am a leader in the interaction I am in, however humble, formal or informal. I lead where my influence extends.

So long for now. We will continue this discourse as I am still in the process of growth and will have a lot more to write. Remember my favourite saying “the road to success is always under construction.”

Yours fondly

My older self.

10 February 2016

4.2.11 The way forward, new beginnings and creating new opportunities

As societies grow and change, so do families. Despite a portrayal of my family as restrictive, I salute them for adjusting and accommodating Muslim women’s changing perceptions. I was encouraged by older cousins who became teachers and am thankful for their influence in my life.

My mother was disappointed that I got married and did not opt for doing my PhD, although she didn’t even know what a PhD was. I wanted to be in control of my world, and what better route

than academia? I am genuinely grateful to my husband for his continued support and encouragement. I always had the feeling that through my readings, I wanted to be an empowered woman. Inspiring and supporting other Muslim women is important to me.

When I look at how I can help other Muslim women enact leadership, it is clear that Muslim women need the desire to be empowered through education. They need to have a passion, desire and vision of what they want in life. They must have intrinsic motivation and a plan of action, and then other things can be negotiated. As a Muslim woman, I have influenced others through my hijab and my lifestyle. They have been extremely comfortable with me and who I represent through my dressing and disposition. [Curly Sue removes her hijab and reveals her curly hair]. I am what I am, and do not need my hijab to prove myself.

The future is very bleak in every profession. I want to teach people values. I am not anti-Muslim, but the mannerisms of Muslims worry me. Their views on life are a worry for future Muslim women. They have no value for time and punctuality. I want to educate people and teach them the simple things that make life work. I worry a lot about the way we Muslims are in general. Many of us lack values. I want to do value-based education. I want to encourage Muslim women to think, and if they can think, they will be able to lead. Presently Muslim women need to learn about humanity and to impart knowledge to others. Long ago, if you wanted to be a *Moulana* (Muslim priest), you had to be mentored by some elder to qualify. Likewise, I feel the need to help Muslim women with degrees because their understanding of life is limited. We are growing up in a different world. Education is now a commodity, a title behind the name, and how you can use it to push your way using this title. I call the new graduates ‘certificated idiots’. I want to impart experiential knowledge. It’s about the experience you gain from your curiosity about the world, which is lacking in our Muslim woman. I ask myself what my purpose is in this life as I will be accountable to Allah about how I spent my life on this earth. How will I account for the maximum use of my time, and how will I be spending this time? What am I going to take from the hours I had today? I find the need for a commitment to ongoing learning.

As Muslim women, there is never affirmation and validation of other people’s successes, and I struggle with this. As a Muslim woman, if you value the goodness in other Muslim women, if you can give and receive compliments, and share in others joy, you bring the Muslim female

community forward. You help to develop that Muslim female community. So be happy for others, as well as for yourself.

4.3 Awesome Annie's story

This narrative relates Awesome Annie's childhood experiences in an Indian suburb, her relationships with family members, patriarchal influence on her leadership as a student, marriage, and professional leadership in a new democracy.

4.3.1 Childhood during the 1960s in an Indian township

I am a child of the '60s and grew up in an open space in Chatsworth's heart, an Indian township in the south of Durban, populated mostly by Indians who were Hindu, Christian or Muslim. All the houses looked alike, made from hollow blocks and painted different colours. I attended a regular State-governed Indian primary school (also known as a public school), which all children of the '70s attended. It was populated by the local cultural and religious groups of boys and girls. There was no choice in the school I went to, and I mingled well with friends, boys and girls, and we dressed like any child would dress. This socialising was easy for me because my dad owned a business in Chatsworth and was well known by the local community. I was not affected by a discriminatory society like some of my collective friends, other than the name-calling by different cultural groups as 'sulas' or 'slum-ow' or 'slum chick' (slang word for Muslim girls and boys). Our lives were quite ordinary, and the only discrimination we faced was the racial discrimination between Indians, Africans and Whites. There was no discrimination between other Muslim groups and multicultural, Hindu and Christian girls in my Chatsworth neighbourhood.

We grew up in an open space of playing fields and large backyards and bonded. I grew up differently as a child. I ate banana curry (a traditional Indian dish made mostly by the Hindu community) from my friends who were not Muslims and enjoyed every moment spent with them. We were not judgemental about other cultural and religious groups.

4.3.2 My *Abba* (father), an angry man

My father, not an easy man, was an angry man who could lift the table if angered. My mum cushioned us from this, and over the years, was instrumental in calming him down. However, now he is a more mellowed man with lots more patience. I guess time and age has done this. I helped

in my father's business to serve the customers who were mainly from the Unit 3 Area (known as Westcliff) in Chatsworth, Durban, South Africa. The lowest income group of Indians was allocated homes here due to the rezoning of land by the Apartheid Government (Group Areas Act 41 of 1950).

4.3.3 Mum, a bright lady of her time

My mum was and still is a powerful and bright woman. Besides being a lovely mum, she helped our dad in the family business. Everything from the company was shared between ourselves and our extended families. Although my mum didn't finish school, she had and still has the most beautiful handwriting. Mum always wanted an open space for her children, so much so that she built a 'den' for her sons to hang out with their friends, under her 'nose' in our backyard. She wanted to keep an eye on them while they socialised with their friends. She was and still is a real motivator and strong supporter of me and often says that you should reach for the stars despite your situation. My mum was amazing, and her strong disposition and enormous strength rubbed off onto me to this present day, as I stay focused and goal-orientated, making me the woman leader I am today.

4.3.4 My *Bhai* (brothers)



Figure 4. 2. My guardian angels, my *bhais* (brothers).

The drawing above represents the bond between my siblings and myself, each one of them making valuable collective contributions to my existence. I was the eldest of five children and the only daughter. My brothers and I shared a close bond and have immense respect for each other. As the eldest, I was often charged with taking care of my brothers, as my mum was busy in the family business helping my dad and came home very late, just in time for supper. I helped to sort out the family meals and keep track of my brothers. I recall making pastries to earn some pocket money as I had my own needs and wants, and the money my parents earned at the shop was spent wisely.

I am thankful to have had my brothers in my life, as they helped me grow and become a strong woman who was ready to take on the world. I recall my growing up years of high school; my brothers placed no restrictions or impositions on my lifestyle. As a young girl, I was always protected by my four brothers. They were the most amazing individuals. Being the only daughter with four brothers, I was treated like a rose amongst thorns. I was often favoured by my brothers and was blessed to have such supportive siblings. They were around to motivate, assist and guide me. They were also my strongest critics and said things to me as it should be. They did not ‘beat around the bush’. This openness and honest relationship helped to shape me into the woman I am today. My brothers worked in the shop. When I went to university, they used to give me pocket money. Today my brothers look up to me for advice, as they have helped me to become a strong person. Previously my choice was my choice, and they were there to support me; therefore, they placed no restrictions on me. However, this has now changed. My two elder brothers always remind me about the do’s and don’t’s of a Muslim woman (such as my dressing and disposition). In my opinion, they have become more religious as they have got older and begun to heed what they see as the message of the Quran.

4.3.5 Extended family, patriarchy and being treated as visitors in our home

Growing up in a large extended family was a bonus, as I had numerous aunts, uncles and cousins around me. There was a lot of interference from my extended family of *phuphies* and *fois* (aunts), who were dad’s sisters and *kakas* and *cha-chas* (dad’s brothers). We all lived next door to each other. Involving ourselves in each other’s lives was normal and an accepted reality by all families.

All the girls in the family were doted upon and were often teased that we were only ‘visitors’ in our parent’s home and that we would be married soon. I remembered going on outings to the beach and picnics together. Many of my cousins married at the age of 17 and 18, some of them not even

finishing school. Some of my cousins were married at 16 to men who were much older than them. Some of my cousins experienced marital problems, and I recall my dad stepping in to help extinguish the ‘fires’ that many of my cousins faced as they experienced marital difficulties. My father saw the problems that these cousins of mine encountered and began to have a different opinion of girls. He saw that it was in my favour to study and encouraged me to continue studying. My parents were a little more open-minded about my education and insisted that I should complete my matric.

As a young Muslim girl, I attended a local Indian government high school with a student population of Indian boys and girls in my suburb of Chatsworth. I wore a white dress and pants as the school uniform. In high school, I was always encouraged by my parents to do well. I was inspired by my parents to participate in many activities. No cultural or religious impositions were placed on me. However, this was short-lived, as the physical maturity and growth spurts of my body started developing. I became *baligh* (reached puberty), and I was gradually, through cultural socialisation, prevented from taking part in activities. Being *baligh*, placed restrictions on girls’ movements, dress and disposition. Girls are taught to dress in *hijab*, be cautious around the opposite gender, and about hugging and kissing the opposite gender. They are encouraged to pray regularly, fasting in the month of Ramadaan and giving to charity.

I often represented my school in speech contests, debates, and on many occasions, I was called upon to be a master of ceremonies at different school events. My greatest supporters and critics were my four brothers and my numerous cousins who supported and encouraged me. They often went home relaying stories of what I had done at school and how proud they were of me.

4.3.6 Embracing the opportunity to be educated

My teachers, especially my guidance counsellors, were instrumental in convincing my parents that I should apply to study at a training college or university. My first career choice was to become a microbiologist. However, this degree was only offered at a university that was about an hour away from home. Even though I was accepted, my father refused to send me as I would have to board away from home, and this was not an acceptable practice in Islam. As Muslim women, we are not allowed to travel or live a distance beyond 77km without a *Mahram* (an unmarriageable male protector), but it would have been OK to study away from home if I were married. Hence I declined the offer and accepted an offer to study teaching and at a local Teacher Training College.

As I was the first female in my family to study, this decision placed enormous stress on my parents. It had to be a joint decision involving my extended family of uncles and other older men in the family. They were only concerned with what other people would think about me or would think about them. In my Muslim family, patriarchy existed as men's voices were more superior, and whatever they said was treated as gospel.

My father's brothers (*kakas* and *cha-chas*) were considered our fathers. We were a collective society. Therefore, my uncles collectively permitted me to study teaching, as this was a highly suitable profession for a Muslim female. It was seen by our parents as a convenience rather than a challenging job. Titles such as caregiver, homemaker and mother figure are strongly associated with being a teacher. These jobs are those that we were socialised into during our growing up years. There was no going back, and I embraced the opportunity. I was very excited as I was the first female in our family to pursue tertiary education. I set an example and paved the path for other girls in our family. I was the first female in my family to graduate from a Higher Education Institute. My parents and paternal uncles attended my graduation. I began this journey at 18, and in 1989, I was armed with this teaching qualification. This certificate was the start of many more as I completed my BA Degree, Honours and Master's degrees, as I was keen to develop further to be of better service to a broader community.

4.3.7 Leadership opportunities at university

During my university years, there were many opportunities as student representatives and being members of other social and political committees for students, but not for Muslim girls. I now realise that this was my assumption. As a Muslim female, I was reluctant to take on the opportunities as it involved going for meetings at odd times of the afternoon and evenings. I had to be home by *Magrib* (sunset prayer). As a girl, I could not be without hijab after sunset; engaging in social activities besides going to a religious gathering was forbidden.

As a result of my upbringing, I was always aware of what was and was not allowed for a Muslim girl. I didn't feel left out, as I knew my boundaries and didn't bother to become a leader. I only listened to the talks. I accepted things as they were.

4.3.8 Novice teacher and heading to the south coast of Durban

As a novice teacher, I headed off to my first teaching post on the South Coast of Durban in 1990. I did not move away from home but travelled daily to school about 15 km from home. I had the opportunity to touch the lives of others and helped lead them to the future. I knew that I would not immediately see the fruits of my labour, but I was happy to plant the seeds, as I knew they would blossom into precious flowers as they grew.

I started my career as a new, Muslim single teacher who was very enthusiastic. My whole focus was around work, charts, and the way my classroom looked. I didn't care about what my charts and books looked like because the school didn't follow any religious offerings. I came from a middle-class family, and because of this, I had a little more disposable income. I used my own money to pay for and make charts, and other resources for my classroom, as resources were limited at my school. Teachers with limited financial resources found it challenging to use their money to make charts to enhance teaching and learning.

I focused on getting my learners to be well-disciplined and always maintained a close bond with them. We began to understand each other, which made my teaching much more comfortable, as they knew from our relationship that I wanted them to do their best in school. My punctuality and innovative teaching strategies motivated them to be punctual. As a young teacher, I spent many hours planning and preparing lessons for my large class. During facilitation, I planned various assessment strategies and tasks, which allowed me to reflect on my teaching. I kept notes and comments about each learner's performance within my classroom for assessments they engaged in. Reflecting on my notes allowed me to look at the strengths and weaknesses in my teaching and the learner's ability to understand concepts. I had the luxury of teaching anything. My enthusiasm was noticed. I started teaching with great passion. I was told by a Muslim male teacher that I was going too fast and that when I reached the top, I would suffer from burnout. I guess he meant well and was only looking out for and protecting me.

I got involved in union matters as a result of being single and with no family responsibilities. I gradually began to see the opportunities that were available for all religious groups. I embraced the first leadership opportunity that became available, and that was of being a Union Representative of a Teacher Union, as it didn't involve any hectic actions and involvements. My

only role function was to attend meetings and cascade the information to and from school. However, some teachers felt I was showing off when I took on this position as a novice teacher.

4.3.9 Marriage, home and three beautiful kids

I was later transferred to a fully Islamic school in Durban, where the learning and teaching environment was predominantly Indian. There were mostly Muslim male and female teachers. I dressed according to the rest of the Muslim female teachers, wearing my hijab. I was fine in this environment for six years. During this time, the curriculum was continually changing. I was comfortable and didn't bother to look for leadership opportunities. I took the longest to get married, as I was studying. My younger brother married before me. I eventually got married and moved schools when I was pregnant with my third child. Being married placed further restrictions on my dressing and social interactions. I was forced to wear full hijab as I represented my family at family gatherings and other social or religious gatherings. If a married Muslim woman did not wear a head covering and loose-fitting clothes, she would be the cause of gossip.

I then moved on to a cosmopolitan, multicultural environment in an inner-city school context. I was overwhelmed and wanted to leave. I often went home complaining about the lack of facilities at school, and my father used to say 'I am tired of you complaining, either resign or think why you were placed in that context'. Unfortunately, I was not allowed a transfer to another school, and became sad and looked at this experience as only 'passing through'. However, I was constantly praised and reaffirmed by my white colleagues for the meagre efforts I made. I taught in the Intermediate Phase, which was not my speciality.

Initially, I was reluctant but eventually started making small changes in this school. I started initiating Outreach Programmes such as a school Feeding Programme (where nutritious meals are provided daily for the school learners from low-income families). I engage with the service providers daily, ensuring the timeous delivery of all meals. I was also instrumental in coordinating the student exchange programme. I then got into the Foundation Phase, and my career began to take off like a space shuttle. I started blossoming and began writing Foundation Phase books for a local publishing company. I also began attending many workshops that were initiated by the Department of Education. As a public school teacher, I was expected to participate in professional development courses to get continuous teacher professional development (CTPD) points. I also

needed to re-professionalise myself because of receiving financial benefits, which were a once-off bonus based on my salary.

4.3.10 Leadership in the new democracy

I am currently the Deputy Principal at an inner-city school in Durban with many learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. I am enjoying this new but challenging portfolio and feel as if I am living my dream. I feel truly blessed to be allowed to serve the less fortunate. My present school has a student population comprised of AIDS orphans, foreign learners, street children and many other learners from challenging social, emotional and financial backgrounds. I lead and advise learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments around me.

I was always supported by my family, but not by other Muslim women around me. Some of my colleagues are surprised how I became a DP (Deputy Principal) and often make comments like 'How did she get there?'. To me, this was a sign of jealousy. The most significant contention, challenge and interference came from other Indian female teachers, who had more of a problem with my promotion.

As a Muslim woman teacher dressed in full hijab, I experienced a different form of prejudice from other race groups. This was with regard to halaal meals (food that is lawful or permissible for consumption and is prepared with specific ritual procedures such as the slaughter of animals, cleaning and storage of the meat), alcohol which is forbidden, and a lot of other social issues relating to our Muslim values of living a life that abides by the teachings of the Quran, the Holy book of God's message to mankind, and *Sunnah*, laws coming from Gods Messenger. Some non-Muslims tend to have a dislike for Muslim female teachers. They don't take kindly to our lifestyle of conformity; thus, I did not get the post of Principal, as the school had discos and for Muslims, dance takes an individual away from the remembrance of God and other social functions. This community felt I was a threat because of being a Muslim and my values of not drinking, not partying, and doing good when no one was looking. The non-Muslim community was not welcoming to the values I stood up for. Therefore, I stood back because of my religious values and socialisation, as well as my inhibitions.

4.3.11 My collage: A reflection of my life's journey

The opportunity to create a collage and reflect on my life's journey was quite therapeutic and exciting (Figure 4.3). This journey of introspection helped me to connect my current life with the past. Where am I today and what helped me to get here? Had it not been for this task, I am not sure that I would have taken the time to look into this. I felt like a traveller in time.



Figure 4. 3. Awesome Annie's collage about her experiences as a Muslim female teacher.

4.3.11.1 Images used in the collage

I looked for images and words that resonated with feelings and memories of my achievements. I did not realise that this would be quite relaxing, and sort of fun and playful. I could not believe that my life had so many exciting achievements and that I had come so far. Memories of how I got to where I am makes me quite emotional, and at the same time, immensely grateful. It was a feeling of being blessed firstly by the Almighty. I have been so fortunate to have such a fantastic family that supported me in my journey. From the time I was a little girl, I clearly remember that there

was an instinct or desire in me to go out into the world and make a mark or a difference. After creating this collage, it was a feeling of accomplishment - I did it! Despite coming from a conservative background, I became the first female in my family to go to college and get a degree and venture out into the world to make a difference.

4.3.12 My emotions as we discussed at our collective meeting

One of my first leadership accomplishments: during my schooling years, I was a prefect and took part in speech competitions. I was master of ceremonies for functions. I felt excited, passionate, blessed and loved. My family members were thrilled with my successes and my cousins, especially my female cousins, looked up to me. One of my uncles said, 'This girl is going places'.

In my pursuit to study for a teaching degree, I knew my family was conservative. Hence, I accepted that my career choice had to be something that would enable me to get their blessing. Coming from an extended family, I needed to seek the approval of my dad and his brothers. Teaching was a suitable career for a 'girl'. Hence, I got their support. I was not too perturbed that my choices were limited; I just wanted to study further, and since this was the best option, I grabbed it. At my graduation, my dad, mum, and dad's brothers were present, and they were so proud of me. As for me, I was elated as I was the first to get a degree.

In my first teaching post, I was now a classroom leader, helping to shape the world. I took my responsibility quite seriously and always made an effort to do my very best. I always believed in lifelong learning, and I studied further while I was teaching. There was no stopping me. I wanted to push ahead because I was passionate about what I was doing and not because I had to prove something. I was a union representative and an active member of different committees, etc. as I enjoyed having an opportunity to share and grow.

Marriage, teaching and motherhood - so much was happening, and life was like juggling. It was not an overwhelming feeling, but rather an exciting, challenging journey. The things that helped me through were a supportive husband, excellent family support and sheer love for my job. Being a parent is no easy task, but it also made me a better teacher. I wanted to give more as I felt that this is what I would like for my kids.

I loved being a teacher and was always looking out for new things. Researching new methods, sharing and coming up with creative ideas was essential to me. All of this just seemed to come

naturally, driven by my passion. Hence, I became the head of the Foundation Phase department. Being in a level 2 (head of the department) position is no easy task. You lose friends as sometimes you have to be more assertive in your approach. But the one thing I believe in is to lead by example. I never ask anyone to do something that I have not done. I believe in servant leadership. I work with my teachers, and you get a lot of support in this way. Sometimes you do get a bit of negativity, but I've learnt to be bigger than that. I always looked at the bigger picture, and I tried not to sweat the small stuff. There's also no end to my learning.

'You never work a day in your life if you love what you are doing' is a common saying, and I guess this is true. My achievements are just a bonus, as I love what I do. I don't let people's negativity bring me down, and I believe I must rise above the situation. Hence I am the Deputy Principal. I am an active leader in my school, and I see this as serving God and making the world a better place.

4.3.13 Motivating other Muslim women

To be a significant influencer to other Muslim women, I needed to be a woman of substance and to have a solid foundation of credibility. In a way, I have achieved this as I have interacted in the community, and many know of my school. I think my actions and interactions are a way of influencing and empowering other Muslim women. However, I am not the type to push forward and look for opportunities to address women on different platforms. I try to keep a low profile, but if I am asked, I gladly respond.

Presently I am influencing a lot of young, upcoming Muslim women in my school. There are a lot of Muslim refugees in my school. Their mothers often come into school as well. I often engage in counselling and support them on coping with life, uniquely equipping them with parenting skills.

I must stress that my goal is to motivate all women who must take their stand in the world and contribute to making a difference. I am empowering and leading by example. I think the school is a safe zone for me as I catch them in their formative years.

I feel that some women in our Muslim society can be very judgemental and misunderstand your intention in wanting to help them grow. Some people are very conservative and believe that women can work only from home and not be going out into the workforce. As a result, I am cautious about what I say about empowerment so as not to offend anyone.

I believe that I am a mother first, so as I have two daughters, I have certainly empowered them. It's basically like a ripple effect, and so the empowerment will continue from generation to generation.

I would now like to pursue my PhD involving my school culture, using my Foundation Phase department, because lots of intervention takes place academically and socially. My school's situation is demanding, and a few intervention strategies that come from my research will enhance teaching and learning. I aim to bring about holistic improvement in my school culture.

4.3.14 Letter to my future self

Dear Future Self - 60 years

I trust that you are still keeping firm in your belief that we have been put onto this Earth to serve others. Hope that you are doing more in this regard now that your children are older and you have more time to give. *Alhamdulillah* (Praise God), you are blessed with precious grandchildren that you can help nurture

As I am writing this letter right now at the age of 49, I want you to know that you have done quite well, and you should be very grateful for all that you have been blessed. Not many people get to live their dreams and love the job they have been doing. But you got that opportunity. You took every chance you got to grow, and you made it work for you. Even with your conservative family upbringing, which you still cherish – you managed to turn things and make your mark in the world. You were fortunate, though, that you had such a beautiful family by your side guiding you and cheering you. You have learnt lots of lessons along your journey of life, and the main one is that to live life and be happy, we must learn to give more and expect nothing. In that way, whatever you achieved along the path becomes a blessing. No doubt, there may have been obstacles and challenges, but you are the kind of person who takes it in her stride and plods on knowing that the Almighty is with you.

As a Muslim woman, you still hold a strong value system that you hold steadfastly onto while always interacting with the world without feeling shy or embarrassed. You could stand tall and make all Muslim women feel proud, as you did not shy away from who you were. Instead, you helped lead others onto this journey of self-empowerment by merely leading through example. You were privileged to be given the blessing of teaching others, which helped you grow into the

strong, successful person you have become. The passionate way you chose to seize the opportunities that came your way contributed to your achievements. Hopefully, though, you have not become too swollen-headed and still maintain your humility.

Keep on serving, love laughing and cherishing life, for it's a gift.

Awesome Annie!

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I portrayed the experiences of Curly Sue and Awesome Annie, who taught in public school contexts. I presented their encounters from their early years growing up in Muslim households, their relationships with family members, their schooling, tertiary education, and their present-day professional leadership experiences. I also described happenings in their personal and professional lives that positively and negatively impact their leadership as Muslim women. Their narratives highlight the influence of religion, patriarchy, and gender on Muslim female teacher leadership. I concluded each story with a letter written to the participant's future self and her message to other Muslim female teachers wanting to embrace leadership.

In the next chapter, Chapter Five, I continue to respond to my first research question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? I portray the narratives of Aneesha and Countessa, who both taught in an independent school context. Aneesha's story began in the 1960s. I unpack her experiences of growing up in a female household and present her experiences of emancipation and empowerment and its impact on her leadership as a Muslim woman. Countessa's story is presented differently as she was a child of the '80s, 20 years younger than the other participants, and attending school in the new democracy. I further illustrate their experiences in their independent school context and its impact on their leadership as Muslim female teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE: MUSLIM FEMALE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF ENACTING LEADERSHIP - ANEESHA AND COUNTESSA

5.1 Introduction

To get a deeper understanding of Muslim female teacher leadership, I retraced my participants' experiences within their personal and professional spheres. In the previous chapter, I narrated the experiences of Curly Sue and Awesome Annie, who both taught in public school contexts.

In this chapter, I continue to address my first research question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? Here I present the narratives of the remaining two participants, presently teaching in an independent school context. I start with Aneesha's story and then move to Countessa, the 'born free' of the participants (born after the democratic elections of 1994) and the youngest. Her story is shorter and offers some sunshine and hope for Muslim female teacher leadership. There is an age gap of about 20 years between Countessa and the rest of the participants.

5.2 Aneesha's story

This narrative portrays Aneesha's early years as a Muslim child, growing up in a female-dominated home, domestic socialisation in her home, friendships, and attending madrassa. It moves on to early marriage, relationships with her father and husband, attending university as a mother and her leadership experiences.

5.2.1 Early years as a young Muslim girl

As I close my eyes and began recalling my past, I go back some 40 years, remembering episodes that contributed to my leadership. I lived in a joint family household with uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins. I remember sitting in our communal kitchen in an all-Indian suburb not far from central Durban. My mum slaved over a 'coal' stove (wood or charcoal was used to ignite fire), cooking our meals for our humungous extended family members, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. The smell of the freshly made 'rotis' (Indian flatbread) permeated the entire house. Most meat products in our home were self-reared in our backyards, from goats to chickens. I recall each of us having to rear a lamb or goat by feeding and taking care of it. We bought other meat products from a halaal butcher. Alcohol was forbidden in our home. Daily, my mum's voice

echoed in the long hallways as she called out to family members that dinner was served. I then moved over to the dining room, where all male members were served supper first, followed by the children, and then the household's females. This was an everyday experience for all of us in this extended household. I guess this was the norm and this habitual practice never really bothered other females or me in our home. But as I reflect upon this one episode, I can see gendered roles come into play in our extended Muslim family home from the time I was a little girl.

As I lay in my bed, I began writing in my Journal on 1 April 2015. My memories took me back to a scene in our household of what I now call the BSC degree of Muslim girls (many Muslim girls and womenfolk have labelled baking, cooking and sewing as our BSC degree). I travelled back into the past as if I was in some time machine. Some memories were painful, and deliberately forgotten for fear of opening up a 'can of worms' or unveiling secrets of the past.

5.2.2 My first BSC

My first degree, a BSC (baking, sewing, cooking), was at home. For many Muslim girls, learning to cook was a priority over any other goals and aspirations in life. Unmarried girls of our extended family spent hours with mums or older aunts and grandparents as a form of mentorship for being homemakers. We never had the luxury of spending time with our fathers, as it was frowned upon and considered unimportant. We were the total responsibility of our mothers and never sought the attention of our fathers.

When I look at my memory drawing (Figure 5.1), many memories emerge. Being the youngest of seven siblings (six of whom were girls and one boy) was not easy, as my siblings were double my age and were charged with taking care of me. My six sisters and I shared a close bond. Some of my sisters attended school, while others were socialised into domestic chores such as cleaning, baking, cooking and sewing. My brother and other male cousins were nurtured towards entering the family business. I never had a close relationship with my only brother because of his unique characteristics. He was seen as the rebel in our home, claiming entitlement. We were never allowed to socialise with boy cousins or uncles.

Eating out was very expensive and never considered as extended family living had substantial financial implications, and so it was unaffordable. We dressed by always wearing a dress and pants but not necessarily covering our hair. We covered our hair when visitors came over or when we

went outside after *Maghreb* (sunset prayer). Life back then was tough. I witnessed my older sisters plucking vegetables, spinach, tubers and other edibles from our garden to prepare a meal.



Figure 5.1. Aneesha's drawing of a typical family scene in her home, growing up as a Muslim girl.

5.2.3 Friendships

Socialising with friends from different religious backgrounds was *haram* (forbidden), especially with boys. Our parents believed that we would go astray if we socialised with friends who did not belong to the same faith. However, I must have been exceptional as a 'laat lammetjie' [late born] as I was allowed to socialise with my primary and high school girlfriends who were not Muslims. They were allowed to come over to my house, but I could not go to their homes until I was in my final year of high school. My dad probably changed his attitude towards his upbringing method, or probably he was experiencing an intergenerational change in attitudes about bringing up girls. I was allowed to go on outings with my girlfriends (with limitations of not attending any afternoon or evening social activities). Going out with boys was not permissible.

5.2.4 Islamic afternoon school

I attended madrassa [an Islamic afternoon school] in our nearby primary school, about 2km from home. We walked to and from madrassa in small groups, sometimes playing in the local park. Religion was deeply embedded in the blood that flowed in our veins. In madrassa, elements of the Quran were taught and learnt. As a young girl, I was not allowed to play with friends after school, as attending madrassa was compulsory. We attended separate classes for boys and girls and dressed in *abayas*, *hijab* and *kurtas* (girls' outer garments) and a *topee* (white hat covering the head of boys). Boys went to Mosque for their *salaah* (prayers), and girls and women prayed at home as they were no facilities for women and girls. Following the Quran's teachings (holy book) and *Sunnah* (obligatory rules) was essential to us Muslims. I remember sitting at *Maghreb salaah* (evening prayer) and reciting the Quran loudly. Reading the Quran was the accepted practice in every Muslim home, and we prayed jointly as a family. Ladies would pray behind or beside the men, maintaining a small divide between the two. Culture and religion played a huge influence. Being born into a conservative Muslim family also shaped my life experiences as I was forced into culturally accepted forms of behaviour.

5.2.5 Suitors and early marriage

As I began to search through some old papers, photos and other artefacts, I stumbled across a few photographs that evoked many forgotten and untold stories of Muslim women in our home. My thoughts now moved to a festive occasion when I was about five years old. I remembered my *chacha's* (father's brother's) wedding. The function was not ordinary but extraordinary, where the immediate and extended families would come together to celebrate the marriage. It was a grand affair, and the celebrations took place from a month in advance, culminating in the *mehndi* (adorning the bride's hand with intricate designs) and the exchange of *kunchas* (gifts), for the families and the bridal couple and then culminating in the *nikah* (religious ceremony of marriage).

I recalled many experiences coming from our female majority household. Back then, a family with many daughters would prioritise early marriage, as daughters were considered a burden and an extra mouth to feed by many family members. No prominence was given to female empowerment. Girls in our family were often referred to as visitors and were told by our parents and relatives that they were visitors and would be married someday. Suitors coming to our home to 'view' my sisters and cousins, with a marriage proposal, was a usual weekend activity. Many of the men were much

older than the girls in the family, and family members ignored the age gap as they had the final say in the marriage arrangements. Today many of us refer to a bride who is very young as a ‘child bride’. Most Muslim parents’ criteria for selecting a groom were based on finances, occupation and religion.

I remembered the days when a suitor would come to ‘see’ one of the ‘girls’. The girls would come out dressed in their best *salwar kameez* (Indian pants suit and a head covering), carrying a ‘tea tray’ so that the ‘boy’ would know that this was the ‘girl’ who he needed to ‘look at’ and say if he was ‘happy’ to accept her hand in marriage. Emphasis was placed on arranged marriage. Daughters were not allowed a ‘love marriage’ as family and friends saw them as being forward and bringing shame to the parents. Other friends and family members would term them as being ‘fast’ (promiscuous).

5.2.6 My Dad, my friend!

My dad was my friend, confidant and role model. Every grey hair and wrinkle on his face matched his titanium heart, which told an unforgettable story. Dad started working menial jobs from an early age to provide for his extended family. Living in an extended family with aunts, uncles and grandparents was a common feature of any Muslim family because they did not believe in nuclear family living. It was a tradition that my father was forced to follow. If family members went out to live on their own, they were considered outcasts. Steeped deep in patriarchy, the men of the family ‘ruled the roost’.

My father hardly ever received a formal education, as he had to provide for his extended family. My earliest memory of him only goes back to the time of my Grade R years. My older siblings told me that my dad worked in a blanket factory near Durban’s east coast, and in the afternoons, went around door to door selling edibles to people. I recalled my elder siblings telling me how hard he worked to put food on the table. To me, this was the most selfless task, as his priority was feeding for his extended family in ensuring that they had food, shelter and clothing. I did not witness this because I was the youngest of seven children. I may have missed these indelible memories by a generation or two because of our varied age gaps, but these stories told to me only reaffirmed the hero he was.

My memories of my father were of him working in the Early Morning Market, running his own fresh produce business handed over to him by my paternal grandfather. He handled the business with a firm hand and soon became a very successful businessman. His caring and sharing nature has always been a constant reminder that we should be grounded in whatever we undertake. His daily reading of the morning newspaper together with his business interactions (other small business people who bought their fresh produce from him in smaller quantities) was instrumental in him being self-educated. His knowledge of current affairs was remarkable. Patriarchy was deeply embedded in our lifestyle, but I guess my paternal grandfather and father saw the merits of allowing my mum to carve a niche for herself in the family business as there was no one else to help out.

5.2.7 My mum, oh, how I miss her! Hardly a story to tell besides the pain and separation

Spending time with my mum was limited, as she worked in our family business. I remember the days when both my parents would get up at the crack of dawn to go to work so that we could live a better life. Mum had a difficult life, balancing a large extended family, going out to work and coming home to be an ideal mother. My maternal grandmother and mum were the first Muslim women in my family that I witnessed taking on leadership positions. They were wiser than other womenfolk in their home. They were forced to take these positions because the men in the family were engaged in other business opportunities, such as clerical work and other business ventures. This was looked upon by family and friends as their daily routine, and the working lifestyle was an example to be followed.

When I was 27 years old, mum had become very sickly with diabetes and suffered from renal failure. I recall those painful days of her illness, where she would be ushered to be dialysed. She would return home very sick and wanting to vomit. Excruciating moans due to the pain of a headache would permeate our home; we were helpless. After a few years of battling with her ill health, she succumbed to her illness. Her continued struggle through her journey in life from being a wife, daughter-in-law, mother and leader, was an example to emulate.

5.2.8 Education dilemmas

Life was hard for our family, and after much deliberation with other male figures in the extended family, my sisters were encouraged to finish school and seek some tertiary qualification; however,

they did not, due to lack of finance and opportunities, as well as the options of early marriage. But life was different then. When I went to a co-ed Indian high school in my new Indian suburb, my dad ensured that I was given everything of the best because I had to become somebody. I suppose this action was because he was now financially better off, and he could promote a girl child's education. In high school, I was never allowed to wear long pants as this was not part of our school uniform; this changed when I was in Grade 11, as I began wearing long grey pants as many of our schools started the transformation. Leadership opportunities in high school were limited because I represented a minority group of Muslim learners. I was not a prefect or even a club leader. However, I was a member of the school music group and always represented the school at functions, which were very rewarding and made me feel special.

5.2.8.1 Excluded because of my Islamic dress

My exclusion from the school netball team was a massive blow to me. I recall that horrible gloomy day in winter. I was on the school netball team, and it was almost time for our interschool tournaments when I was forced to wear shorts and a t-shirt. I refused because I was Muslim and was not allowed to reveal my legs. I was not willing to compromise. As a result, I was excluded from the team and never allowed to participate in any other netball matches. This experience devastated me, as playing netball was my passion. I felt humiliated and hated my Physical Education teacher, who belonged to another minority group. Later in high school, I began playing tennis, which helped me deal with the disappointment of being marginalised because of my religious beliefs.

5.2.9 My first experience of university and marriage

I passed matric excellently and attended a local university for two years until I met the 'Love of my Life'. My first experience at a Durban university was not eventful when it came to leadership opportunities. I was clannish and only stuck to a group of Muslim girls, as I felt uncomfortable about joining other Indian students. I was one of the minority groups of Muslim girls that went to university. Therefore, leadership opportunities were few because we lacked confidence and self-esteem in taking on these opportunities. I was compelled to marry at a young age because courtship was forbidden as a Muslim. After having my girls, I became a stay-at-home mum and put my career on the back-burner. Leadership in my home became a priority. I took on the responsibilities of a perfect mother and wife. This was because of my cultural socialisation that was embedded in

my upbringing. I ensured that my kids did well at school and that I ran the perfect household. I also began a home industry, where I supplied finger foods and snacks to corporates and small businesses. Money from this business helped to pay for my own needs, such as a few luxuries.

5.2.10 My motivator, emancipator, my knight in shining armour

My husband has been my motivator and role model. His continued support and motivation towards my re-professionalisation have been instrumental in shaping me into the strong Muslim woman I am today. Back then, I secretly wished to be a corporate woman in my career. I sometimes dreamt of being in a boardroom or other corporate contexts. However, this did not materialise, as I did not have the ‘contacts’ to ‘organise’ me a job. I registered for my first degree in the early 1990s. This lifelong journey of education continued for me, a shy and reserved Muslim woman. I did not understand the many hardships Muslim married women faced as my home was different. I was strongly supported and motivated by my wonderful better half; to this day, he is my pillar of strength.

5.2.11 My cheerleaders

Over the past few generations (I call it the ‘generation gap’), this scene has changed. I must admit that the male members of my family (father, father-in-law and husband) have thawed in their patriarchal dominance to accept female empowerment within our family. As a Muslim woman, family, home and religion began to play a huge role in my life at present as well as in future career paths. Irrespective of who and how my family members were, they all influenced my teaching and learning career in their unique way. Influence from extended family members was crucial.

I remember the day of my graduation. As my dad congratulated me, his eyes filled up with tears. Joy, pride or sadness, I would not understand - only he could understand his emotions. But I know that he was very proud of me. I was the ‘apple of his eye’, as he would consult with me daily on many things that he needed clarification and ‘guidance’ on. Our relationship blossomed into one of deep friendship and counsel. He was the pivotal figure in ensuring that I was empowered.

My professionalisation was an overwhelming experience for all family members, as they stood proud and celebrated this milestone, together with many others that followed. I was told that I made them very proud and represented a new generation of women. Both parents and in-laws were incredibly proud of this achievement. Many of my female family members looked up to me as a

role model. Often, many of them have asked for my advice when entering university or any institution of learning.

5.2.12 A second chance

Once my younger daughter went to preschool, I went back to study as a full-time student. During my years at the teacher training college, I was always involved in campus activities but did not lead any. Other Muslim students looked up to me because I was more mature than them and always excelled at my studies. I recall waking up at the crack of dawn, getting lunches and other school essentials prepared. I would get the kids ready and pack them off to school and then make my way to campus. There were days where I had to shuttle my sick children with me to campus and the doctor. I remember writing an exam and having to rush off early because my little daughter was hospitalised. This multitasking was difficult, but as the saying goes, ‘No gain without pain’. I completed my degree and received the Rector’s Commendation (an award for outstanding academic performance). Juggling the many hats of student, mother, wife and daughter, I eventually entered the professional sphere.

5.2.13 First teaching experience

When I began my first teaching experience, I made every effort to be a master in my craft. This context was familiar territory, as it was a Muslim school, and I thrived in this context. I was forced into wearing a hijab (head covering) and loose-fitting outer garments as I had to fit into the school’s ethos. My teaching and learning were almost perfect. I planned beautiful learner-centred lessons, making it interesting for my learners, and conducted remedial classes in the afternoons to help learners who struggled to understand concepts, as parents were results-driven.

I took teaching and learning outside the classroom by arranging displays and outdoor curricular activities like using water-play (pouring and filling containers) for math lessons, allowing learners to understand concepts like measurement. My classroom was to be envied, as I had the most beautiful charts and classroom décor for my learners. However, I had to make sure that the pictures and charts did not have people and animals with eyes, as this was forbidden in this Muslim ethos school. My classroom was beautifully stimulated with resources to reinforce reading, writing and math. I was also forbidden to use resources that had the word ‘pig’ or a picture of a pig, as this Muslim independent school’s ethos did not promote any ‘unlawful’ literature or curriculum

deemed sensitive. I used tables for a class reading corner, nature corner and concrete apparatus like counters and abaci to make teaching and learning fun.

I became the envy of all existing teachers (Muslim and non-Muslim). I earned the title ‘blue-eyed girl’, because I was well-liked by my managers (Head of Departments and Principal) for the work I was doing with the learners in my class. I received many compliments from parents for being an extraordinary teacher. Working in this well-resourced school enabled me to try out new activities with my learners, like cooking and baking simple items for eight-year-olds, starting a gardening project (planting vegetables), and a book challenge (for every book read and reviewed, learners received a R5 tuck-shop voucher).

5.2.14 Damaged identity as a Muslim female teacher

During my years as a teacher, there were many moments of sadness, frustration and demoralization. As a Head of Department, I was responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning within this phase. Monthly I was asked to account for the low marks in Math and English, especially in reading and comprehension. This continuous process of accountability was demoralizing. There was often the ‘blame game’ from the Grade 4 teachers that learners coming to the Grade 4 classes did not know how to read and comprehend. My enthusiasm as a teacher and Head of Department was crushed by acidic comments and glances from senior managers and the Grade 4 teachers. This blame game created a lot of tension and hatred amongst myself, Grade 3 teachers, Grade 4 teachers and management, so much that it began to affect my mental and physical well-being, and I started second-guessing my capabilities in managing the Foundation Phase.

5.2.15 Enacting leadership in my Muslim ethos context

My leadership opportunities came fast and furious as I quickly had to occupy leadership positions at school and district levels. In school, the leadership initially was not welcomed. This job entailed managing teaching and learning, staff appraisals and moderation of assessments. My task was to evaluate and develop teachers’ classroom management, teaching, resources, lesson planning and record-keeping as well as the moderation of their formal tasks. Muslim teachers superficially welcomed my work, but behind me were planning and plotting how they could prove me a weak manager. By nature, I am a quiet and somewhat reserved person, and many Muslim colleagues misconstrued this as a weakness, to the extent of bringing me down at the first opportunity. This

judgemental attitude was very painful, and on many occasions, I considered giving up my position because of emotional trauma. However, as the years passed, the colleagues became more affirming and accepting, as they realised I was not going anywhere.

During meetings with joint management, women's voices in the management team were often selectively heard and very rarely considered important. As a result, recently, all women in the team were asked not to sit near the men. This action made us uncomfortable, but our sentiments were considered unimportant. A senior male colleague also told me that he had asked the junior male teachers not to take instructions from senior female Heads of Departments like myself. I was shocked and hurt by this sabotage of leadership.

I assisted the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) Conference by being a guest presenter and facilitator for the foundation phase. I was also appointed as Foundation Phase coordinator for the AMS schools. Later on, I tried applying for other leadership positions in Higher Education but was unsuccessful. One Higher Education Institution asked me this question: *How would you handle being a Muslim in Hijab in a non-Islam environment like ours?* I was shocked by this question during the interview and realised that our democratic country's transformation had not occurred. There was still prejudice by non-Muslims as well as Muslims against Muslim women. Again, my religious attire stood in the way of the decision to employ me.

I also took on leadership positions of marking fourth-year Educational Law exam papers. After a few years, I opened an Educational Consultancy, and presently it is run by my husband, a retired Principal. During the last 3-4 years, I have also engaged with many schools, assisting them with whole-school evaluation and Professional Development. I recently turned down a lucrative position overseas because of uncertainty and fear.

I was on a mission to better myself and my practice by taking advantage of any opportunity that came my way. I have also taken advantage of other teacher professional development opportunities, and I have moved from novice to expert as I have re-professionalised my teacher self with a Higher Diploma in Education, an Honours degree and a Master's in Education degree. I am currently studying towards a PhD. My journey to better myself through studying has enabled me to bring in new ideas that I discovered through my studies and implement them in the classroom and school. One example is of collaboration through discussion and research in our meetings, aimed to improve teaching and learning at school.

5.2.16 Some of my co-curricular and curricular leadership experiences

My first opportunity arrived when I facilitated the new OBE (Outcomes-Based Education) and the Foundations for Learning curriculum for the Department of Education in the Umlazi District. In 2003 I was randomly selected from the Umlazi District to attend a local facilitators' course on HIV/AIDS. It involved attending the workshop at a hotel over two days. For the first time, I stayed without my husband and kids. In the same year, I was selected from 15 teachers to mentor an ex-learner from our school, who had embarked on a B.Ed. degree. During this period, I attended a course on Education, Training and Development Practices-Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP- SETA) on mentoring students in the Further Education and Training band. This was run by the Independent Examination Board (IEB). This course was aimed at assisting in the mentorship programme.

In school, I was the chief organiser of the school 'fun run', which involved planning the routes, arranging for support from the police and ambulance service, and allocating duties to teachers, together with providing refreshments and medals for the learners.

Over the past 10 years, I conducted several workshops for the AMS Schools (Association of Muslim Schools). I was also appointed as the AMS Foundation Phase coordinator, which involved organising meetings and keeping the Foundation Phase teachers informed about curriculum changes. I was also involved in curriculum development at the AMS level. I also assisted my school in getting accreditation with Umalusi (a board monitoring teaching and learning standards). This process involved monitoring and evaluating the school on a set of criteria, including teaching and learning, infrastructure, policies, leadership and governance. I worked with a team to ensure that the school fulfilled the requirements of Umalusi.

5.2.17 Spreading my wings

In 2014, for the first time in the history of my Muslim school, a colleague and myself attended the Annual Women's Leadership Conference in Gauteng. I only applied to participate in this conference to test if senior management would give females in my school the same opportunities afforded to male teachers. To my amazement, my application was approved, with the school subsidising the entire conference, which included travel, accommodation and attendance fees. This experience was overwhelming, and we were treated like royalty. Special halaal meals were

prepared for us. This experience contributed to my learning, and it encouraged me not to be judgmental and stereotypical of males in our school as senior management consisted of males only.

5.2.18 Letter to my future self

Dear Aneesha

I write this letter to you, having gone through much deliberation and introspection into your experiences as a Muslim women teacher. Your journey as a Muslim women teacher has been like a rollercoaster, with thrills and spills. It started with you as a naïve 18-year-old to a now master 50-year-old. This journey has been incredible as you fought subtle socialisations of early marriage, motherhood, subservience and domestication. Family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances have enabled you to wipe away the tears and make a transition from an introverted, ill-informed and naïve Muslim women teacher to that of an intellectual, warm, and confident Muslim teacher leader of the future.

After immersing yourself into the challenges as a Muslim women teacher and a Muslim woman of the 21st century, you can share what you have learnt thus far. I hope you can sit back sipping a cup of your favourite beverage, reading this memoir of your efforts with tears in your eyes and a heart filled with pride that you have done something for the Muslim females in your society.

Your experience with close family members was a struggle, as you tried to create a space for my intellectual self. Patriarchy, judgemental attitudes, religion, culture, cultural and religious prejudices and assumptions of your growing up years dominated your understanding of Muslim women teacher leadership. These incredible stimuli forced you to think out of the box. Your continued engagement with your critical friends and participants allowed you to get a deeper understanding of why things were the way they were in the past. Robust discussions, introspection and deliberate recollection of memories steeped in negativity towards leadership opportunities enabled you to pave a futurist journey for women teachers of the generations to come.

At night you can now put your head on the pillow and sleep a peaceful sleep knowing that you struggled on a lifelong journey of achieving leadership as a Muslim female teacher. You have inspired many other young and older women along this journey, who to this day, emulate your quest for lifelong learning and leadership opportunities.

You can now stand up bravely, full of confidence and address other Muslim women to take charge of their lives by standing up for their rights, standing up against patriarchy and gendered indoctrination and other factors that prevent women from occupying leadership positions. You have encouraged them to grab every opportunity of leadership and empowerment that comes their way.

My message to all Muslim women, young and old, is to move away from tunnel vision, put on those 3D visors, and embark on a peripheral vision to create a niche for future Muslim women.

Wipe away those tears and stand tall because you have left an indelible impact on other Muslim young and old achievers!

Yours forever

Aneesha

5.2.19 The way forward-new beginnings

As a way forward, there are many suggestions, messages and ideas that I would like to encourage. Firstly, I would like to encourage all Muslim women to make changes, starting with themselves. Find something in life that you would like to do to empower yourself. Empowerment does not mean that you are going against the teachings of Quran and *Sunnah* (daily Muslim lifestyle). You can still be a leader abiding by the laws of the Quran, as my amazing fellow participants have been. Develop yourselves by having courage and conviction to enact leadership by starting at home and making this a lifelong leadership journey.

Empower your sons and daughters by encouraging leadership in and outside of the home. Don't encourage your daughters to marry early without developing a skill for themselves. Teach your sons to be more tolerant towards all women, especially Muslim women, more so their sisters, wives and mothers. Teach them to move away from patriarchal indoctrination and to develop for themselves a vision of what qualities define a Muslim woman of this century.

As a Muslim, be happy for other Muslim and non-Muslim female leaders. Don't let jealousy and envy get the better of you - support other females in their leadership opportunities. Do good and good will follow you!

5.3 Countessa's story: A twist to the tale

This narrative presents Countessa's early childhood experiences, living with extended family who belonged to different religious faiths and her schooling experiences in a new democracy. It extends to her early marriage, experiences of patriarchy, religious and gender discrimination and leadership struggles and triumphs.

5.3.1 My amazing childhood in the 21st century

I am a 21st century child and very different from you guys. My childhood was amazing. I grew up in a nuclear family where both my parents worked. As a young child, my growing up years were very different from those of you guys [other participants]. As a child, my early life was spent in Chatsworth (an Indian township in the south of Durban). I lived with my maternal grandparents during the week because school was near their home, and on the weekends, I lived with my parents.

After a few years, my parents bought their own home in Phoenix, and we moved from one Indian area to another. Phoenix (an Indian township in the north of Durban, populated mostly by Indians who are Hindu, Christian or Muslim, with brick houses painted different colours and set close to each other). We lived in a small two-bedroom house, but life was full of fun. I remember my mum saying, "We had so much of fun back then".

5.3.2 My Mum a 'revert'

My ma (mother) was my role model. She was a 'revert' (a person not born Muslim who accepted the Islamic faith); thus, I had relatives of different religions in our extended family. My parents are representatives of a mixed marriage. I was raised with lots of Islamic morals and values, and Islamic culture permeated our home. My siblings and I were aware of our families' religious differences, and as a result, we grew up having great respect for every member of our extended family.

Mum ran a small crèche back then and was a huge inspiration to others around her. She was a funky woman whose laughter and dress sense were contagious and carried herself with poise and charm. I admired the way my mum managed our home and our family. My mother always said that she had matric and a diploma and wanted us to have a degree. She drilled it into us. She always says that each generation must be better than the one before. At my most recent graduation, she

was very proud of my achievement and could not control herself as she announced to many that I was graduating again with another degree. Presently both mum and dad run a takeaway. As children, we had lots of freedom within boundaries. I was ‘spoilt’ because I came from what I call an ‘affluent’ background.

5.3.3 Dad, a gentle giant

My father was a police warden, a man with a strong physique fitting enough for the job he occupied. No one dared to mess with him as he was physically strong. He was well-spoken loving and very kind. I often called him a ‘gentle giant’. Some family members wanted to study but didn’t have the finances. Mum and dad took out money to help them and paid for them, but they abandoned their studies after a year or within the year. There was no motivation from their parents. They wanted to get married or work to earn money.

Being a Muslim female has its challenges of education; however, I had a family that encouraged education and career enhancement. My dad promoted educating a girl child. I was the only one in my family who took advantage of the opportunity to educate myself.

5.3.4 Extended family

A few of my male Muslim cousins are very supportive and continue to encourage me to re-professionalise myself. Some of my older male cousins who do not have a tertiary qualification are jealous. My boy cousin on my husband’s side of the family strongly believes that a Muslim woman’s place is at home or madrassa. He believes that Muslim women should be in *pardah* (a veil covering the face). His daughter, at 16, is being forced to get married.

5.3.5 Our neighbourhood

My neighbourhood was very community-oriented. I played on the streets with other children from my area. We all knew each other and each other’s’ families. I didn’t see the difference between my friend’s religion and culture and my own. We bonded well with each other. Neighbours invited each other for meals and reprimanded us if the need arose. We were children who belonged to our closely-knit community.

5.3.5.1 Patriarchal men of our close-knit neighbourhood

Most of the grandparents in my community stayed home to take care of their grandkids. Most of our parents worked, especially men. Very few women in my neighbourhood worked. My grandmother was an exception. She worked until she came home one day and was told by my grandfather that she could not go back to work because the food was not cooked and it was not his responsibility to take care of the kids.

However, my grandfather changed his attitude when my mum was much older. He expected his three daughters and one son to work. My mother was the next generation of working women. Grandpa now encourages my sons to help me with household chores and admires me for the Muslim woman I have become.

The men at home, especially my father and maternal grandfather, are so proud and supportive of my achievements. Grandfather always compliments me on how I dress and asks me to go into modelling, not realising I am a Muslim and that modelling is *haram* (forbidden). He always calls me his 'Red Riding Hood' when I wear my red cloak and scarf. He accepts my dressing, although he is not Muslim. He watches everything. He was so proud of my achievement when I went home with my graduation attire. My grandfather often says he is very ashamed of how his son (not a Muslim) lives. When my grandfather watches my kids praying, he often says, 'Look at these Muslim children, they learn their religion, not like our Tamil children, they don't even pray'.

5.3.6 Attending madrassa

As a child coming from a Muslim home, I attended madrassa in the afternoons. Attending madrassa was non-negotiable, and I spent every afternoon reading the Quran and praying my *Salah*. Learning the Quran was challenging, as my Mum could only read the English Quran, and we had to read the Arabic Quran. Mum was unable to help me revise, and this created a challenge for my siblings. We had to wait for dad to help us with revision or taking *sabak* (religious studies homework lessons).

5.3.7 Teenager and impressionable

I attended a girls-only ex-Model C school (a government school administrated and funded by a governing body and alumni, which was once only for the White population of South Africa), where leadership opportunities were minimal. At school, I always sat at the back and listened, not

bothered to be active. I was always the clown of the gang or clique. This school had mainly white learners. There were very few leadership opportunities, as I was reticent and reserved. Leadership positions were given to the outspoken ‘white girls’. Also, the teachers picked what they thought best represented the school. Very few Indian girls made the prefect list. As far as being Muslim, we were a minority and stuck to our little cliques.

To make things more complicated, in 2001, when the 911 attack took place, I was in Grade 10, and that’s when the separation between Indians (Muslim) and the white girls was rife. We were not allowed to join white girls or even Indian girls, because they had a lifestyle unique to their culture and religion. We were perceived by some of the learners who were not Muslim as ‘terrorists’. We became the victims of Islamophobia (hatred of Muslims).

5.3.8 My tertiary education

I applied for various courses, and teaching was one of the options. I only got into teaching for fear of not studying at all. I liked kids because mummy had a crèche. I needed to go to university because of watching both my parents work so hard. I built my self-esteem when I went to Teacher Training College, where the Indian lecturers pushed us into leadership opportunities. I was forced to be the spokesperson and not the scribe. I began to love standing in front of people and to talk. I loved it! I loved campus life.

We were mainly girls, and I finally found my purpose. Teaching was my passion. Our lecturers, mostly females, empowered us and gave us so much opportunity to be great. They gave us support and direction. We were exposed to all age groups of learners (boys and girls), which gave us lots of experience. On campus, I was in charge of a few things for my lecturers, such as collecting or handing books and papers. These lecturers urged us into little leadership opportunities. During practice teaching in my third and fourth years, the mentor teacher allowed us to be alone with the learners and engage in teaching and learning. They also allowed me to run after-school activities. They gave us opportunities to strengthen our coping and leadership strategies.

5.3.9 Early marriage and a patriarch for a husband

I married at an early age and felt as if the marriage had ‘sentenced’ me. I feel as if my wings have been ‘clipped’. My husband is patriarchal and always imposes his idea of a perfect, subservient Muslim wife, who must depend upon him. He detests my independence. This has caused many

fights in our marriage. I am always stressed about the financial affairs (paying the utilities) of our home. I also did my domestic chores to ease the financial burden of getting help, as well as starting up my baking and decorating home industry.

I don't know whether my husband feels intimidated by my accomplishments, especially now that I have passed my Honours degree, as he often says, 'You think you're better than everyone else'. I think he feels this way because he has only done matric and is dealing with his challenges at the moment. I have always encouraged him to study further in an endeavour for him to feel good about himself. I have to empower myself by studying, to be a better person.

5.3.10 Novice teacher

My first year of teaching was amazing. Campus gave me so much knowledge to be great and confident. My first teaching post was in a government school in Phoenix, with 40 learners in my class. My classroom was beautifully decorated with relevant charts and resources to stimulate the learners. The teacher before me left suddenly, and there was no preparation for the year or any planning done for that particular class. I went in with confidence and had a successful year. I took charge and managed teaching and learning like an experienced teacher. This was my first leadership opportunity. Being in a government school, I didn't experience any gender differences. Our classes were mixed, and we socialised freely with male teachers as we shared a common staff room.

In teaching, I found my voice and built my self-esteem during my tertiary education. Therefore, I took the lead in committees and helping at functions, such as prayer meetings and other social functions. During this time, I was the coordinator of the school's Debs Ball (where boys and girls participated). However, this was against my religion, because of the song and dance and mixing of boys and girls, which was an essential element of a Debs Ball. Nevertheless, I embraced this leadership opportunity. I was responsible for everything, and it was a big challenge at times because I had to collect money and keep invoices. In my first school, I received many negative comments from a very domineering female teacher. She was very intimidated by my youth and was threatened by my new ideas and willingness to bring about change in teaching and learning. She was not Muslim and always passed nasty comments, especially during Ramadaan when I donned my headscarf (I didn't always wear it), when she would give comments like, 'You have gone holy all of a sudden'.

I also had the same comments from my family members who were not Muslims. A few uncles from my mum's side would often tease us by greeting, *As Salaamu Alaikum* (Peace be upon you) in a derogatory manner. Their tone and disposition were annoying. At first, this irritated me to the core. I would respond by greeting them in the full Muslim greeting of *Wa Alaikum us salaam warah matullahi wabarakatu* (and peace be upon you too). My mum sensed my anger in my response and said that her family members were old and ignorant and should ignore their comments. I always felt the need to prove myself around them because of their feelings about my mum accepting Islam. We never had strict rules in our home or family about our relationship with boys or men.

5.3.11 Leadership traumas at school

I am currently employed at a Muslim ethos school in a suburb about 10 km from central Durban, where the teachings of the Quran are embedded into the school community's daily lives. Teaching subjects like music and performance arts (dance), which is part of the Life Skills curriculum, is forbidden. I remember my first week at this school, when I was called into the office by my principal and deputy, who were both men, for using the expression "dead-meat" in my discussion with learners in my class. I recall running to the bathroom and crying my heart out because of this. I felt so humiliated and demoralised, as it was the first time that I was reprimanded as a teacher.

Drawing of eyes in my art lessons or on my charts was forbidden as it represented a living being. I recall how masking tape was used to block out the eyes from my charts by another teacher. I was upset and confronted the teacher. I didn't know much about putting up pictures with eyes or putting up a picture of the pigs. I was ignorant about the representation of eyes until this teacher pointed out a verse from the holy Quran (Surah Al-Baqara, 7), which points out that "their eyes are a veil". All literature and resources have to be integrated with Islamic laws. Every day in school, we pray *Zuhr salaah* (prayer after midday) in *Jamaat* (congregation). We pray in separate areas, as the mixing of the sexes during worship is not allowed. We even have separate staffrooms for male and female teachers. Priority is given to *Salaah* (prayer), and all other teaching and learning activities are based around this.

At my present school, I never got to be a grade coordinator (a grade leader), an opportunity to enact leadership. To me, I think the time was not right. I cannot waste my energies, asking why not me. Before the post was announced, I was excited because I wanted the job. I had many

exciting ideas that I wanted to try out. Often my ideas are shot down and not even considered. I have a sense that these ideas are getting shot down because they would come off better than those of my coordinator. I also sense that many of the times, this is more personal than professional.

I am a very outspoken person, and I sometimes find myself in a fix because I don't know how to express myself appropriately without getting emotional or sounding rude. My conflict resolution is not very good, and I often do not want to upset the applecart. I want things to run smoothly. Many of my fellow Muslim teachers are now intimidated by me and can be nasty if they want to. Once I heard a comment, 'these people with their Master's and doctorates mustn't teach in the Foundation Phase, they must go work in the university'. I get the feeling that they are intimidated because of my disposition, which is lively, bubbly and smart, and I have a good relationship with both male and female teachers.

I have recently toned down my disposition. I am darker skin in colour and often used to wear makeup to make myself look prettier. I have changed my attitude and dressing to stop my fellow teachers from giving me nasty comments. I no longer talk or socialise with male teachers for fear of getting offensive comments. They have taken my true identity away. My attitude has changed for the better, I think. I would hear comments like, 'Something must be wrong, where's your red lipstick?' I now focus on my teaching and learning, and now feel that I have more time to prove myself.

Emotionally not getting the grade coordinator position did affect me. But, I went home and told my mum I didn't get the post, and she told me 'Sort your life out, get your ducks in a row'. This year I feel I am on the top of my game. I am not a 'window dresser' but a hard worker'. I am well prepared for my lessons and plan with many innovative and new ideas focusing on teaching basics.

5.3.12 A lifelong learner in an endeavour to be empowered

I have just finished my Honours degree and would love to pursue my Master's in Education soon. I feel very capable of taking on this challenge. I do have other problems that I have to deal with, like my husband and kids. As a family, we need to work out what will work for our unique needs in my endeavour to study further. At school, I continually face barriers in attending workshops that are organised by other independent Muslim schools. There is gatekeeping as often only senior management or male teachers are invited to participate. The support base in my independent

schools is often lacking. Therefore, I try to attend a few departmental meetings for public schools to be in the loop of the latest happenings dealing with curriculum.

5.3.13 Representing myself through my collage

5.3.13.1 My emotions while making my collage.

When I was asked to make a collage (Figure 5.2), I thought, OK, that's simple, as I knew myself well and thought it was going to be easy. Building the collage was difficult, as I am such a complex person as there are so many sides to me. I am different every time you meet me. I do things differently, and often my mum compares me to herself as a mother and says, "You do things better than me. I never did this when I was a mother".



Figure 5.2. Countessa's collage.

As I attempted to make my collage, I began to flip through some magazines. As I paged through the magazine, many questions plagued my mind. I began to think about who I was, my favourite things, my goals in life, what kind of mother I was, and the legacy I wanted to leave behind. I felt utterly overwhelmed and mind-boggled. I began to think in stages as to how the process evolved.

I began to choose pictures that described my likes, my favourite things, my children, what goals I wanted them to achieve, my heart and what I desired, not forgetting my piety and spiritual needs. During each stage, I felt the excitement building. I felt like a child who got a new toy. This

experience was exhilarating and thrilling. It allowed me to unlock the hidden thoughts and emotions of who I was. I found this experience very satisfying, as I discovered it to be gratifying as I learnt more about myself.

5.3.14 The leader I am now

I feel I have stifled my leadership. I tried being a better me, not Islamically but in general as a human being. Previously I never bothered to give off my best; however, I now go the extra mile to make things like charts and worksheets to support my teaching and learning. Although my school is a mainstream school, we take learners with learning problems, such as ADD [attention deficit disorder] and ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. Because of this, I have learnt to change my methodology, especially moving away from bookwork and rote learning.

I have moved away from whole-class teaching to group teaching. I plan learner-centred lessons that focus on the learners being actively involved. I now work together with the children around me. I afford them the one on one interaction, using lots of resources like counters and flashcards to teach reading, problem-solving and computation during Math. I am more confident in trying new ideas. I have taken my mentor's advice and decided to share my best practice with other teachers in my grade team; unfortunately, my ideas have not received recognition as of yet. I have tried to empower myself and others in my team but have not seen success in the short term.

Resources such as books are in abundance in my school, and I have used these readers and books to create a foundation phase 'mini library', where learners can borrow additional books for reading. I have also taken books that have been torn and made them into reading cards to improve reading.

I have completed a First Aid course (paid for by the school) and now assist learners in the primary school who get injured. I am part of a few teachers in our province to engage actively with teaching and learning using technology. I am the facilitator teacher in the Foundation Phase for the iPad classroom and a reading programme. I now use iPads to teach Math and English, making it exciting and hands-on for my learners. The iPad classroom involves using apps from the iStore to facilitate teaching in Math and English in the Foundation Phase. I took advantage of using technology and created a video for learners to learn to spell using PowerPoint. I also troubleshoot when teachers are 'stuck' in delivering lessons, using 'Apple classroom'. The design and layout of furniture in

the iPad room is now my responsibility. My school has paid for my iPad and my training so that I can be the in-house facilitator.

This year I coordinated the swimming gala because my HoD gave me this opportunity. I used this as a platform to show the teachers in my team my leadership abilities. This involved coordinating events, allocating duties, informing parents about the swimming gala, and finally putting it together. To my advantage, the gala was an outstanding success.

At times I do feel down. I spend my own time to make teaching and learning resources. I am not one to seek fame; however, I was sad when a photograph of my classroom environment was taken and shared on social media as another colleague's classroom. I was shocked and hurt. I feel sad at times because other Muslim female teachers in my context misjudge me. I am a family person and do not have the time to dress to show off. In my context, some Muslim women always want to outdo each other by their dressing and material things. After receiving my honours degree, there is lots of jealousy from a few of my colleagues because of my qualification. As Muslim women, to a large extent, we are never happy to see another Muslim woman progress or succeed. We always wonder and ask questions like 'How did she get there?'. I have now realised that it is not so much the colour you are in my Muslim school environment or the amount of money you have, but now jealousy emerges because of qualifications.

5.3.15 My role models

Becoming a role model was easy, as I never looked up to anyone in life; however, I was inspired by my mum's sister, who was the first female in my family to obtain an academic qualification. She is now a Head of Department (Engineering, Graphics and Design) of a school in Phoenix in Durban, South Africa. I always spent a few days during the school holidays with her. Watching her daily interaction inspired me to want to be like her. Sometimes, she took me to school, and watching her within a classroom set-up back then influenced my own career choice.

I never wanted to be like anyone. I wanted to create my path and lead. I wanted others to follow me. As a young Muslim mother enacting leadership, I wanted to develop my brand, and I am now inspired to one day open my kitchen for designer cakes and cupcakes, which will help ease the financial burdens. I used to bake before I came to this context, and people around me used to

stigmatise me as a ‘show-off’. Now, I am more determined than ever to make a name for myself as a Muslim female teacher and an entrepreneur.

5.3.16 Letter to my future self

Dear Future Self

I hope that you are still your charismatic self after all your years of working hard to make valuable contributions to Muslim women teachers in enacting leadership as well as empowering sons of Muslim mothers, enabling them to make the changes in their own lives as men to encourage future Muslim female leaders.

As I am writing this letter at the age of 29, I want you to know that you have done yourself proud with all your achievements that you worked so hard for. You have worked hard to change people’s perceptions of you as a Muslim female from a mixed marriage background. You can be proud, as you have fought the judgemental mannerisms of many male and females from your past, who looked down upon you because of your extravagant dressing and your feisty disposition.

You took many chances to ensure that you empowered yourself. Despite what family members thought about your empowerment, you contested every hurdle as a tool for your empowerment. Not many young Muslim female teachers are as brave as you to have continued your lifelong learning. Despite the challenges you faced from your husband and other patriarchal men in your family, you still managed to make a mark in many Muslim females’ lives in your family. You have been brave to fight your husband’s patriarchal impositions and emancipate yourself by getting a divorce.

You were fortunate to have the support of your parents, who stood firm in supporting your empowerment and leadership despite the influence of other family members. You can salute them for this.

You have learnt lots of lessons along your journey of life, and the main one is that if you put your heart into something and believe in it, you can overcome any hurdle. As a Muslim woman, you still hold a strong value system that you hold steadfast onto while always interacting with the world without feeling any less than others that are empowered. You have been a strong role model to your sons, who today themselves are champions in encouraging Muslim women leadership. Today

you can be proud of yourself as you have seized every opportunity to grow and help others grow in the process of achieving your own goals.

Keep smiling, lead by example, and encourage others to emulate you - for your ability to bring a little sunshine into the lives of people you have interacted with has been the most significant attitude of your life on earth.

Long live!

Countessa, the once brave warrior

5.3.17 Way forward

The counselling I received in my personal life has encouraged me to pick up the pieces, and this has made me into the influential Muslim female teacher I am. I now embrace the opportunities given to me more voluntarily. I have also learnt to be a better Muslim by inculcating the values of being a Muslim. I have recently facilitated a workshop for my school and attended a First Aid course to assist learners in my school context.

5.3.18 My message to other Muslim female teachers

If I had to live my life again, I would encourage Muslim female teachers to get out of their imaginary world and be genuine role models for other young Muslim women. Some Muslim women in my context don't hesitate to trample on others to achieve their own goals. In my context and my social circle, some of the women are very superficial. They pretend to want to help you, but gossip, making demeaning remarks, such as "You saw what she did. You saw how she was dressed".

I urge young Muslim women to make a name for themselves by taking advantage of the opportunities given to them: live your dream! Don't preach to others, but lead by example. As Muslim female teachers, we need to move away from being egocentric and seize opportunities to empower other Muslim women around us. We need to move away from being materialistic and realise that we take nothing with us upon our demise. We need to be remembered for the good we have done in our service to Allah's creations.

Don't be intimidated by other teachers, Muslim or non-Muslim, male or female. First impressions count; be genuine about how you make others, Muslim or non-Muslim teachers, feel. From my

own experience, I consider watching my words as being very important. I have a 'BIG MOUTH'. I do not think when I talk and often end up in trouble for saying the wrong things. I tend to speak my mind.

As a mother, I want to leave a legacy of strong leadership for my two boys. They must be confident and afford women the respect they deserve. I want to encourage them to work hard in life and support Muslim women in occupying leadership opportunities. They should live in an environment where they can be proud of the women around them.

As a young Muslim female teacher enacting leadership, I live by the three most essential qualities:

Time: Take a few minutes to share your knowledge with your colleagues

Trust: Be truthful in what you have said to build trust

Transparency: Don't allow people to judge you, be an open book, invite other Muslim teachers to watch your best practice.

I believe that a sharing nation of Muslim female teachers is a caring nation. This is indeed a guaranteed recipe for the success of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I portrayed the experiences of Aneesha and Countessa, who both taught in an independent school context. Their experiences start from their early years, growing up in Muslim households, to their present time and context. Through composing their narratives, I learnt about their personal and professional leadership experiences, both joyous and sad, as they negotiated between challenges and victories.

In the next chapter, Chapter Six, I consider my first sub-question: What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the *personal sphere*? I draw on relevant literature to understand reasons for our personal leadership experiences, which started as daughters, mothers and students and eventually culminated in the Muslim female teachers we are today. I consider tensions that affected the participants' leadership experiences within the personal sphere.

CHAPTER SIX: OUR EXPERIENCES AS MUSLIM FEMALE TEACHERS OF ENACTING LEADERSHIP IN THE PERSONAL SPHERE

“When she is a daughter, she opens a door of *Jannah* (paradise) for her father.

When she is a wife, she completes half of the *Deen* (faith) of her husband.

When she is a mother, *Jannah* (paradise) lies under her feet.

If everyone knew the true status of a Muslim Women.

Even the men would want to be women.”

Sheik Akram Nadawi (Islamic Scholar)

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6.1 Introduction

Through this collaborative self-study, I aimed to understand Muslim female teachers’ experiences of enacting leadership. In Chapters Four and Five, I represented the four participants’ experiences in narrative form. In this chapter, I address the first part of the initial research question that informs this study, sub-question, 1a): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?*

In presenting this chapter, I analyse the stories of the Muslim female participants’ life experiences concerning leadership (as narrated in Chapters Four and Five), focusing on the personal sphere. I explore leadership in the home, leadership and responsibilities within the home, tensions, restrictions and not speaking up.

6.2 Leadership in the home

To analyze the participants’ stories, it was vital to put them into context. Many leaders ‘cut their teeth’ in leadership in the home, and the participants Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Countessa and Aneesha were no exception. Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014), in their study of Finnish female leaders, point out that, for many women, experiences at home influence their development as leaders. In revisiting the participants’ narratives, I understood that our leadership as Muslim female

teachers began in the personal sphere. In this broad area of the home, I present data using the following two themes identified in my inductive reading of the participants' stories: leadership as a caregiver and leadership and responsibilities within the home.

6.2.1 Leadership as a caregiver

In many homes, caregiving is a routine practice dutifully fulfilled by girls and women without resistance or questioning. Children are generally taken care of by female members of the immediate or extended family members. In their study, Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014) noted that this caregiving responsibility involved caring for children's physical and emotional needs. This was no exception in our Muslim homes as it was a routine practice that made us feel very safe and comfortable in our childhoods, as we were cared for by our mothers, female siblings and grandmothers. Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014) point out that caring and safety in the home can be crucial in enabling women's leadership. From this, I understood that caregiving by our families and ourselves within our personal sphere laid a firm foundation for women's leadership roles.

6.2.1.1 Taking care of younger siblings

In my understanding, taking care of younger or older siblings was an act that came naturally to most of the participants. Being the oldest siblings in their families, both Curly Sue and Awesome Annie played a pivotal role in caring for their younger siblings. Awesome Annie, the eldest of her siblings, remembers her role in taking care of her four younger brothers because her mother helped her father in the family business and was never around to fulfil her caregiving responsibilities. In her narrative, Awesome Annie explains:

As the eldest, I was often charged with taking care of my brothers because my mum was busy in the family business, helping my dad. I helped to sort out the family meals and keep track of my brothers.

Similarly, Curly Sue recalls how she was both 'sister' and 'mother' to her younger siblings:

My birth position has naturally endowed me with the power of leadership, being the firstborn of six siblings. Sibling relationships have certainly provided me with the tools for negotiating, compromising, accountability and setting trends.

For Aneesha, this caregiving responsibility was different. Aneesha remembers how she was the youngest of seven siblings and was taken care of by her older sisters while her mother helped out in the family business:

Being the youngest of seven siblings (six of whom were girls and one boy) was not easy, as my siblings were double my age and were charged with taking care of me. My six sisters and I shared a close bond.

This caregiving experience instilled in Aneesha ‘soft skills’ together with experiences of safety and security. In her story, I saw how Aneesha adopted nurturing and pastoral care skills within her personal sphere through this caregiving experience.

From the stories of Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha, I noticed that caregiving was a vital component in their abilities to embrace leadership opportunities in their lives. Curly Sue and Awesome Annie were actively engaged with the responsibility of taking care of their siblings. Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014, p. 1729) point out that “one element creating a safe atmosphere at home was mutual affection and care”. From this, I realised that this caring for siblings required affection and pastoral care. Caregiving responsibilities helped make Curly Sue and Awesome Annie mature and responsible individuals. These responsibilities prepared them for leadership roles from a young and tender age.

6.2.1.2 Taking care of biological children

For the Muslim female teacher participants, taking care of their biological children was always a priority. As a mother, each participant was the primary caregiver to her children. Mothers are often referred to as compassionate, loving, kind and sacrificing their own lives for those of their children (Yoonkyeong, 2003), which is revealed in Aneesha’s story, where she remembers:

After having my girls, I became a stay-at-home mum. I put my career on the back burner because leadership in my home became a priority. I ensured that my kids did well at school and that I ran the perfect household

In their study of Muslim women in London, Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) highlight that some women had personal responsibilities while studying and had to work around this. These women were forced to juggle their responsibilities, leading dual lives or multitasking while studying for a

degree. As one respondent put it, she had to “learn how to juggle and lead a dual life” (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006, p. 11). Tyrer and Ahmad (2006, p. 12) highlight that “many women with childcare responsibilities waited until their children were old enough to be cared for in crèches or left their children in the care of close relatives while they attended university”. From Aneesha’s story, I saw how the daunting prospect of ‘leading a dual life’ can lead some married Muslim women to delay their educational aspirations. They focus on marriage and children as their primary responsibility, as elaborated on by Aneesha:

I stayed home for eight years to care for my two daughters and went back to study as a full-time student once they entered school.

Furthermore, Aneesha recalls her sacrifices as a mother and caregiver to her children once she did resume her studies:

I would get the kids ready and pack them off to school. After that, I would make my way to campus. There were days where I had to shuttle my sick children with me to campus and the doctor. I remember writing an exam and having to rush off early because my little daughter was hospitalised.

Aneesha saw taking care of her biological children as an integral part of her leadership journey. She felt that waiting for her children to be old enough before she could study, together with her ability to care for her biological children, empowered her the leadership skills of negotiation, compromise, decision-making and accountability. From her perspective, raising her children and supporting them to achieve their milestones gave Aneesha the scaffolding to embrace leadership milestones.

Countessa, on the other hand, developed her caring responsibilities from her mother, who she recalls as follows:

Mum ran a small crèche back then and was a huge inspiration to others around her. She was a funky woman whose laughter and dress sense were contagious. She carried herself with poise and charm. I admired the way she managed our home and our family.

Countessa's caring for her biological children (two boys) was difficult, as she had a husband who never took much responsibility for them. Despite her adversities, Countessa continued to care for and support her two sons. In their study, Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014, p. 1729) highlight that women "emphasised the inner solidity of the family, the importance of doing things together, and the culture of caring, making an effort, and safety that emerged". From this, I gathered that Countessa was one such woman who worked hard to take care of her family, making her boys feel safe and cared for.

Mothers like Countessa are not only pivotal in caring for their biological children. They also are instrumental in helping out with financial obligations. In their study, Hertz-Lazarowitz and Shapira (2005, p. 170) point out how one participant spoke about her mother: "my mother never had a room of her own, not until she understood that she also had a right to her belongings, and she shouldn't feel guilty about that. The girls were always taught that they are on a lower level". From this, I gathered that making women believe in themselves would positively impact their identity and enable their leadership within the personal sphere, which Countessa did as she embraced leadership within her private space.

From the participants' stories, I gathered that as Muslim female teachers with children, we needed to organise our personal and professional spaces to cater to caregiving and educational opportunities. Moreover, Tyrer and Ahmad (2006, p. 12) point out that there is "a need to recognise diverse needs and to look towards ways of improving university facilities and provisions to assist and encourage students with caring responsibilities from all backgrounds to take up higher education opportunities". From this, I gathered that Muslim women with children must be catered for at higher educational facilities and must be given opportunities to educate themselves further. I also realised that courses and times of study should provide for the needs of women like Aneesha.

6.3 Leadership and responsibilities within the home

Taking responsibility for many actions within the house was the expected role that many Muslim women fulfilled. These acts started for many of the participants at an early age and began with domestic and financial obligations.

6.3.1 Leadership and domestic responsibilities

From the stories, I understood that we engaged in household responsibilities in addition to our professional roles. Yoonkyeong (2003, pp. 78-79), in her study on context and women's leadership styles in Korea, points out that "most societies socialize people into a certain gender, feminine or masculine, which thereby becomes a significant part of one's identity"; likewise, these Muslim female participants were socialised to perform traditionally feminine roles through domestic chores. This domestication involved cooking and cleaning and was reaffirmed by caring for families within an extended context.

Curly Sue remembers how she engaged in domestic activities:

My Math Geometry and Algebra lessons began in the kitchen! Like many of my generation Muslim girls, I was schooled to assume the many roles of a homemaker. I cut onions and potatoes for my mum. I could fill samosas [Indian pastry] in no time. Now everyone calls me 'Samosa Sputnik'.

Similarly, Awesome Annie remembers how she helped out in her home:

I helped to sort out the family meal as I was the eldest of my siblings, and my mum was busy in the family business, helping my dad and came home very late, just in time for supper.

Aneesha recalls how she managed her home:

I stayed home for eight years to care for my two daughters; I ensured that my kids did well at school. I also began a home industry where I supplied finger foods and snacks to corporates and small businesses. I recall waking up at the crack of dawn, getting lunches and other school essentials prepared. I would get the kids ready and pack them off to school.

Throughout the lives of Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha, they engaged in domestic activities. Like the participants, many women find themselves relation-bound and involved in multiple accountabilities within their personal spaces (Yoonkyeong, 2003). The experiences of Awesome Annie, Curly Sue, Countessa and Aneesha were shaped by being daughters, wives and mothers.

Deliberate, self- and forced domestication were part of the participants' past life and contributed to their gendered role socialisation. Through their engagement with this lifestyle, they were subtly socialised into leadership, which began in their homes and shaped their future abilities to enact leadership.

6.3.2 Leadership in managing home finances

Taking responsibility for managing funds within the home was a critical leadership task that the participants engaged in. The participants' financial management was influenced by their personal contexts, where they received the opportunity to enact leadership. Moorosi (2011, p. 215) points out in her study on women's principals' that as a little girl, one participant had to "take on a job so that she could help her mother, six siblings and herself". Similarly, earning money was a priority for Awesome Annie from an early age. She reflects how she earned money as a young girl by:

Making pastries to earn some pocket money as I had my individual needs and wants and the money my parents earned at the shop was spent wisely.

Countessa recalled her need to earn extra money, as her husband did not care to take on financial responsibility for her and her two sons. She remembers the situation within her home:

I always stressed about the financial affairs (paying the utilities) of our home. I also did my domestic chores to ease the financial burden of getting help, as well as starting up my own cake-making and decorating home industry

For Countessa, Awesome Annie and Aneesha, exploring new revenue streams was advance training in leadership. This quality of prudence impacted their lives in the judicious utilisation of scarce resources to enact leadership opportunities. Managing domestic finances had a significant impact on the participants' daily experiences. Moorosi (2011) points out that women do not play leadership roles only in the workplace but are often instrumental in enacting leadership within the home. I understood that this role differentiation resulted in identity formation, impacting participants' thought processes and communication (Yoonkyeong, 2003). I saw how each of the participants took on some financial responsibilities within their personal sphere, which positively impacted their present leadership as Muslim female teachers (Bredeson et al., 2011).

6.4 Tensions

Looking at the participants' stories about their experiences and milestones in the personal sphere, I became aware of particular tensions that manifested in: a) experiences of patriarchy; b) asking permission; c) decision making; d) restrictions; and e) not speaking up.

6.4.1 Experiences of patriarchy

In my understanding, patriarchy is a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family. Patriarchy in Muslim and other communities exists when the community is organised along patriarchal lines. The participants' narratives reflect this system, and, in what follows, I consider some of the trials and tribulations of living in a patriarchal society. I also consider how these amazing women pushed the boundaries to achieve their individual goals of enacting leadership.

6.4.1.1 Playing a secondary role

From the stories, it appeared that the Muslim female participants were often not regarded as fully adult in their homes, even when they had reached adulthood and taken on adult responsibilities of caregiving and financial provision. This seemed to be at the root of tensions related to making decisions and continually seeking permission from the male family members within their personal lives. These male members included husbands, fathers or brothers, grandfathers and uncles. I understood that patriarchy existed in the male head or chief of the family being the decision-maker and having full authority to enable or constrain women's opportunities. This patriarchy was sometimes overt (visible) and sometimes more covert (hidden in action). Similarly, Moorosi (2011, pp. 215-216) states: "Fathers were men of authority who determined their daughter's identity and where they lived, how much education they should receive and when they should marry". From this, I understood that in patriarchal communities, the fate of many girls and women, like the Muslim female participants, lies in their fathers' hands. Furthermore, Barakat (2018) describes how Muslim men hold honorary authority over women, so a woman's father, brother, and husband have some control over her life.

Fathers, uncles and grandfathers were the patriarchs in the participants' narratives. They tended to be stern, harsh and often rigid men, who hardly socialised with females in the household (except their mothers and wives). Female conformity to rules was the recipe for a happy family. Should

anyone dare oppose their authority, all hell could break loose. I found that we often played a secondary role within our homes as Muslim females. I also learnt that our contributions were often not considered important.

6.4.1.2 Serving others, and being served last

This was a recurring role that transpired within Aneesha's home, as she reflects upon the accepted routine of serving supper in her house:

All male members were served supper first, followed by the children, and then the household's females. This was an everyday experience for all of us in this extended household. I guess this was the norm and this habitual practice never really bothered other females or me in our home.

This routine practice in the household seemed normal to Aneesha and her female family members. By contrast, however, Barakat (2018, p. 43), in her study of Egyptian Muslim women, highlights how she was "very angry at the discriminatory practices against women, some of which were subtle while others were very pronounced and institutional". Barakat (2018, p. 42) stated how she became aware of gendered roles: "as we grew older the patriarchal nature of Shamshira became more obvious to me, the subtle sexist comments and suggested gender roles became explicit". I thus began to see how patriarchy was imposed on us as girls. This is evident in how Aneesha remembers being socialised into stereotypically feminine chores:

My first degree, a BSC (baking, sewing, cooking), was at home. For many Muslim girls, learning to cook was a priority over any other goals and aspirations in life. Unmarried girls of our extended family spent hours with mums or older aunts and grandparents as a form of mentorship for being homemakers. We never had the luxury of spending time with our fathers, as it was frowned upon and considered unimportant. We were the total responsibility of our mothers and never sought the attention of our fathers.

Nonetheless, Aneesha's domestic duties are now shared by her husband, who plays an instrumental role in assisting with many household responsibilities. Thus, her husband has supported her leadership development outside the home. Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) highlight the role played by Muslim husbands like Aneesha's, who share domestic duties with their wives. They reiterate the need for "educational and career professionals to re-evaluate misconceptions about Muslim

women, marriage and motherhood that suggest that [all] married Muslim women's movements are restricted by husbands and inlaws" (p.12). I believe that, like Aneesha's husband, more Muslim men needed to revisit their ideas about the roles of Muslim females within their families. From the participants' narratives, it is essential to note some changes in attitude from some fathers, brothers, husbands, and uncles. The experiences of patriarchy were different for each participant. Their patriarchal experiences also differed in some ways from those of the women who came before them (mothers, grandmothers, aunts, female cousins and sisters).

6.4.2 Asking permission

Continually having to seek permission constrained the participants' leadership abilities. However, the participants revealed how asking permission from a male figure was standard practice in their homes. Barakat (2018, p. 44) states in her study on Egyptian women, "until the year 2000, Egyptian women needed their husbands' written consent to travel outside the country". Likewise, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Aneesha and Countessa grew up always having to ask for permission or to be 'allowed' to do certain things. For example, Awesome Annie remembered how her father permitted her to study, especially in terms of her high school education:

My father saw the problems that these cousins of mine encountered and began to have a different opinion of girls. He saw that it was in my favour to study and encouraged me to continue studying. My parents were a little more open-minded about my education and insisted that I should complete my matric.

Awesome Annie reflected on her tertiary journey and how permission had to be granted or withheld considering the laws of the Quran:

Even though I was accepted, my father refused to send me as I would have to board away from home, and this was not an acceptable practice in Islam. As Muslim women, we are not allowed to travel or live a distance beyond 77km without a Mahram (an unmarriageable male protector), but it would have been OK to study away from home if I were married. Hence I declined the offer and accepted an offer to study teaching and at a local Teacher Training College.

Awesome Annie also recalled how her uncles played a pivotal role in granting her permission to undertake tertiary education:

My father's brothers (kakas and cha-chas) were considered our fathers. We were a collective society. Therefore, my uncles collectively permitted me to study teaching, as this was a highly suitable profession for a Muslim female.

Awesome Annie further recalled how decisions were made for her by the patriarchs in her family, to study teaching and not microbiology:

As I was the first female in my family to study, this decision placed enormous stress on my parents. It had to be a joint decision involving my extended family of uncles and other older men in the family. They were only concerned with what other people would think about me or would think about them. In my Muslim family, patriarchy existed as men's voices were more superior, and whatever they said was treated as gospel.

These extracts show how Awesome Annie's permission to study relied heavily upon the men in her home and extended family, once again showing male supremacy. However, it seems to me that this is not aligned with religious scriptures, as Holy Scriptures such as the Quran and hadith promote women's education (Stephenson et al., 2018). This decision about Awesome Annie's education impacted her life choices, especially regarding her ability to enact leadership. Her decision-making rights were taken away by the oppressive and controlling forces of patriarchy within her home and family. Although the decision-makers could be seen to be benevolent or supportive in their decisions on her career choice, they were also oppressive in demanding submission.

Curly Sue, Countessa and Aneesha could be viewed as more fortunate because the male figures around them encouraged them to study. Similarly, Barakat (2018, p. 40) points out how her "dad, a mechanical engineer and a General in the Egyptian army, together with [her] brother and husband supported [her] throughout [her] journey to self-discovery". Support from fathers, husbands and brothers is necessary for the growth of women's leadership. Curly Sue remembers how her father encouraged her development:

My father was a very hardworking man, a victim of his time. He had a hard life and wanted more for us in life. He wanted us to be liberated, but societal expectations were something else.

Curly Sue's father encouraged her to study, despite what society demanded. He broke barriers on her behalf.

I saw how fortunate Aneesha was that her husband and father played an instrumental part in her re-professionalisation journey. Aneesha remembers:

My husband has been my motivator and role model. His continued support and motivation towards my re-professionalisation have been instrumental in shaping me into the strong Muslim woman I am today.

I remember the day of my graduation. As my dad congratulated me, his eyes filled up with tears. I know that he was very proud of me. He was the pivotal figure in ensuring that I was empowered.

Aneesha's father and husband encouraged her perseverance (Hyvärinen & Uusiautti, 2014). From this, Aneesha developed her zest to professionalise herself in addition to taking on leadership in her own home. Furthermore, Aneesha's relationship with her father was seen as "close, positive, supportive, inspirational and encouraging" (Hyvärinen & Uusiautti, 2014, pp. 1732-1733), providing support for her professional leadership development.

Contrary to Aneesha's situation, Countessa only received support from her parents, while her husband was against her self-empowerment:

My dad promoted educating a girl child. I was the only one in my family who took advantage of the opportunity to educate myself. My father and maternal grandfather are so proud and supportive of my achievements.

I don't know whether my husband feels intimidated by my accomplishments, especially now that I have passed my Honours degree, as he often says, 'You think you're better than everyone else'.

Countessa's husband demanded her obedience to his demands, and Countessa still found herself subscribing to what her husband dictated as she found it difficult to speak up for herself for fear of being 'bullied' into submission.

Countessa reflected on her husband and his patriarchal attitude:

I married at an early age and felt as if the marriage had 'sentenced' me. I feel as if my wings have been 'clipped'. My husband is patriarchal and always imposes his idea of a perfect, subservient Muslim wife, who must depend upon him. He detests my independence. This has caused many fights in our marriage.

From the participants' stories about experiences within their personal sphere, it became clear that having to continually seek permission and approval from men constrained their leadership. I saw how their leadership is still limited by a social construction of Muslim women's identity as not being adult enough to make their own choices and decisions and needing permission from men (husbands, fathers, uncles and brothers).

As Muslim female teachers, leadership development was influenced by our experiences within our homes. Seeking permission to spread our wings depended on the patriarchs, our religious practices, and our homes' location (Bredeson et al., 2011).

6.4.3 Decision making

From the participants' stories, I realised that making decisions was often challenging in many respects.

6.4.3.1 Decision making and dressing

Muslim women from diverse backgrounds observe modesty differently, which explains the variation in their dress codes across cultures. Wearing the hijab (head covering) is a mark of devotion and commitment to faith. In some countries, wearing the hijab is obligatory. Still, in other parts of the world, like the United States of America, the UK, or even in South Africa, it is considered a personal choice by law.

I begin by referring to a particular verse in the Quran that focuses on the dressing of Muslim women:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers. And let them not stamp their feet to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, O believers, so that you may succeed. (Ali, 1989, Quran 24: 31).

O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better that so they may be recognised and not annoyed. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (Ali, 1989, Quran 33: 59).

From the above verses, it can be seen that the teaching of Islam encourages Muslim females to dress modestly and regulates intermingling. The participants' narratives reveal how Awesome Annie and Curly Sue knew their obligations about their dress code, which they adhered to in the best possible manner. Once they left the perimeters of their home, and sometimes at home, they were obliged by the patriarchs or matriarchs around them to dress modestly. Their stories show that they were restricted in their choices and were not allowed the freedom to make their own decisions regarding their dress. To illustrate, Awesome Annie recalls how her brothers made decisions about her dress:

My two elder brothers always remind me about the do's and don'ts of a Muslim woman (such as my dressing and disposition). In my opinion, there have become more religious as they have got older and begun to heed what they see as the message of the Quran.

Awesome Annie also remembers how puberty and marriage influenced her dress. Decisions about her dress were guided by the teachings of the Quran and the decisions made by elders in her joint family:

Being blight [puberty] placed restrictions on girl's movements, dress and disposition. Girls are taught to dress in hijab (headscarf and loose outer garment). As a girl, I was not allowed without hijab after sunset. Being married placed further restrictions on my dressing and social interactions. I was forced to wear full hijab as I was a representative of my family

Likewise, Curly Sue remembers her childhood living in an extended family and how she was forced to abide by decisions made by her father and uncles about her dressing:

Male relatives, such as uncles, relegated and dictated how we dressed and behaved, especially our voices, which were not to be heard. We were forced to wear a hijab to not reveal our body parts; however, we were not forced to cover our hair. I grew up to believe

that women did not have ideas, except in the kitchen; men read the daily newspaper, did the thinking, discussed politics and world affairs, and were the breadwinners.

Curly Sue also remembers how she dressed to attend Madrassa, where she had to abide by the dress code. The decision to wear appropriate garments is prescribed in the Quran, but it was enforced by both male and female teachers in the madrassa:

When we attended a madrassa, we dressed in loose-fitting garments, most of the time a black abaya (loose outer clothing) and a headscarf, as this was our 'uniform' for madrassa.

Restrictions about dressing were imposed by the *moulanas* and family members, using the Quran's teachings; however, the very same *moulanas* and family members chose not to defer to the Quran's teachings that referred to the education of Muslim females. To me, this was an injustice. The *moulanas* moved away from the instructions to suit the demands of their patriarchal communities.

As young adult women, Awesome Annie and Curly Sue still had to continually confer with other people to decide how they dressed. As Muslim women, they did not have the same power as men in decision making about their dress. They were heavily dependent on the men in their household or their madrassa to decide their dress.

A similar situation was described by Wood (2014, p. 42): "One teacher complained that she was not happy with the way in which her daughter was being treated by her extended family (not allowed to wear short skirts, had to do all the chores), in comparison with the freedom her son had to dress as he wished, and not help around the house". I began to realise that our Muslim homes often had different rules for males and females. In my understanding, this was due to the social construct of females not being seen as competent enough to make their own decisions.

The participants' stories further illustrate how they learnt that Muslim women's ideal dress code should be loose-fitting clothes. Some wore pants, skirts, shirts and tops without covering themselves in a *jilab* (loose-fitting outer garment) or a hijab (head covering). As Muslim women, they learnt that they must make sure that their clothes were loose and not sheer so that they did not reveal the body's contours. They also discovered that as Muslim women, in general, they should take care not to do things that might attract unnecessary attention to their bodies, e.g., stomping or wearing noisy shoes.

Curly Sue was a rebel in her way and dressed as she pleased. To illustrate:

As a Muslim woman, I have influenced others through my hijab and my lifestyle. They have been extremely comfortable with me and who I represent through my dressing and disposition. I am what I am, and do not need my hijab to prove myself.

Curly Sue felt stifled as a girl and young woman, and these experiences made her goal-orientated, as she wanted to lead a life as a modern-day Muslim woman. As a result, she dressed as she pleased and said that she did not care how others viewed her.

Countessa remembered how her husband's cousin had strict ideas about female dress

My boy cousin on my husband's side of the family strongly believes that a Muslim woman's place is at home or madrassa. He believes that Muslim women should be in purdah (a veil covering the face).

Countessa's struggle to break away from how others viewed her dressing is clearly outlined in her story. She felt obliged to change her preferred dress style to 'fit in' and please others around her, which she reflects on below:

I have changed my attitude and dressing to stop my fellow teachers from giving me nasty comments. They have taken my true identity away. I would hear comments like, 'Something must be wrong, where's your red lipstick?'

This further illustrates how restrictions are placed upon Muslim women and how some women like Countessa feel pressured to change to conform to what is expected by other Muslim men and women.

As Muslim female teachers, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie, Aneesha, and Countessa struggled to develop and maintain their professional identities as Muslim women. They always worried about their physical appearance, especially wearing the hijab (headscarves, loose outer garments and face covers) as Muslim females. Similarly, Adichie (2015) highlights how she was more worried about what to wear than her teaching ability because she wanted to be taken seriously. She felt that her femininity would impact men's perception of her. For the participants, wondering what others thought of them was a frequent occurrence. However, Brown (2006, p. 421) states that "young women are becoming more active in the faith, and they know what rights Islam gives them, and

that Islam gives them the freedom they need”, and this is reflected in Curly Sue’s story. She was a bit more flexible, as she wore her hijab only when necessary.

Tensions around dress in the personal sphere also influenced some participants’ professional experiences. As a disappointed professional, Aneesha’s story reflected her experience at an interview at a well-known university, where she was asked this question:

‘How would you handle being a Muslim in hijab in a non-Islam environment such as ours’? I was shocked by this question during the interview and realised that our democratic country’s transformation had not occurred. There was still prejudice by non-Muslims as well as Muslims against Muslim women. Again, my religious attire stood in the way of the decision to employ me.

From Aneesha’s experience, I could see how Muslim women can be marginalised because they dress in their hijab. As a result of this marginalisation of Muslim women like Aneesha, leadership doors are often shut.

Likewise, Countessa remembers how non-Muslim colleagues judged her because of her dress:

During Ramadaan (Muslim month of fasting from dawn to dusk) when I donned my headscarf (I didn’t always wear it), she would pass comments like ‘You have gone holy all of a sudden’.

To an extent, wearing their hijab was a priority for Awesome Annie, Countessa and Aneesha. Each knew their boundaries and hoped that they would be treated as adults in making decisions about their dress. However, they sometimes had to change their dress mode for fear of being marginalised within their personal and professional spheres. This impacted their self-esteem, self-worth, and how they viewed themselves (Hampton & Desjourdy, 2013). For Curly Sue, her dressing was determined by herself, and she strongly felt the need to seek her individuality. This impacted the leadership skills she portrays today. The qualities of negotiation and compromise strengthened her leadership development.

6.4.3.2 Decision making in marriage

From the participants’ stories, it became clear that many of the young girls were married, and it was often their parents who made decisions about marriage partners. In many of the families, this

arranged marriage was referred to as “*Rishta* (a marriage relationship) and that this would be a family decision, based on the best interests of the family as a whole” (Bolognani & Mellor, 2012 p. 214). Furthermore, in their study on British Pakistani women, these authors pointed out that “parents would do whatever to make their daughter get married to someone they want” (Bolognani & Mellor, 2012 p. 214). This choice of marriage partners by parents is reflected in Aneesha’s story:

Suitors coming to our home to ‘view’ my sisters and cousins, with a marriage proposal, was a usual weekend activity. Many of the men were much older than the girls in the family, and family members ignored the age gap as they had the final say in the marriage arrangements.

Families often played an instrumental role in choosing suitors for the young females within the participants’ homes. Brown (2006, p. 421), in her study on the lives of Muslim women in the UK, pointed out that “forced marriages occur because they don’t know better”, and insisted that Islam permits assisted marriages but forbids forced marriages, but parental assistance in marriage choice is sometimes abused because of a lack of knowledge about Islam”. In terms of the above, the participants in this study did not experience forced marriages.

The participants were a bit more informed than their siblings and other girls in their family, as they found their own marriage partners. For Aneesha, Awesome Annie and Curly Sue, marriage was a blessing as each received immense support from their spouses towards their endeavours in embracing leadership opportunities. However, their stories also revealed that even if you were lucky in marriage, in having a benevolent patriarch (husband), he would still be making the decisions for you as the wife. Even though Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha had enabling husbands, their husbands made decisions for them, reflecting the patriarchal power over them. In my understanding, it also indicates that although their husbands were benevolent, they again acted like parents wanting to ‘permit’ their wives to take up further study and leadership opportunities.

Within this permission granting, there were still many restrictions on the women, such as prioritising their families over their educational or career opportunities. These restrictions prevented the participants from accessing some leadership opportunities because they were relation-bound and struggled to balance home and work.

There may be many reasons why some Muslim men are now giving women more freedom to make decisions. For instance, having a girl child might have made them aware of how patriarchy oppresses females. Perhaps these Muslim men saw how the wives of other men in society were liberated and began to admire them. Men might have started to see the benefits of added finances from their working wives. Fathers might thus have changed their views about their daughters being taught and going out to work. Perhaps they realised that the cycle of lack of opportunities needed to change. To have a happier, more fulfilled wife, you have to ALLOW them to pursue specific opportunities. The men might also have grasped that they needed a literate and educated spouse who could help their children with schoolwork and prepare them to deal with life's demands. As the Ghanaian adage by Dr James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey says: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (nation)".

6.5 Restrictions

The participants' stories portray how, as Muslim females, restrictions were always placed upon them. The accounts show how these restrictions are often 'clothed' under the notion that culture or religion places these restrictions. These restrictions are not only set by men but also by other women. Ultimately there is the underlying notion that women are not fully adult to fight against these restrictions. These restrictions included career choices, schooling and education and socializing, which are discussed below.

6.5.1 Restrictions in education and career choices

Within the participants' narratives, men were shown as making decisions and choices for the direction of career choices. The male figures or patriarchal heads within families engineered Awesome Annie, Curly Sue, Countessa and Aneesha into taking up teaching.

From the stories, it became clear that entering a teaching career was often most favoured by family members. Women generally tend to be disadvantaged in career choices, and many women choose careers in nursing and education, which involve interactions with children (Lorber, 2010). This limited choice of jobs is reflected in Awesome Annie's choice of career:

My first career choice was to become a Microbiologist. However, this degree at that time was only offered at a university that was about an hour away from home. Even

though I was accepted, my father refused to send me. Hence I declined the offer and accepted the offer to study teaching at a local teacher training college.

I realised that teaching was a favourable choice for the participants' parents, as it was not seen as labour-intensive, and interactions with males would be limited. All four participants taught young children in either the Foundation or the Intermediate Phase. The Foundation Phase starts from Grades R to Grade 3; Intermediate Phase, from Grades 4-6; Senior Phase from Grades 7-9, and finally the Further Education and Training Phase, from Grades 10-12. The phases in which Awesome Annie, Curly Sue, Aneesha and Countessa taught and the subjects they taught exemplify how power played out in career choices. However, to an extent, Aneesha and Countessa teaching in a Muslim ethos school provided a security net for their parents and their spouses; any fear of them going astray in engaging in Western practices was somewhat assuaged.

However, these restrictions did not entirely hamper the participants' goals and aspirations as they did sometimes go against their parents' expectations of not interacting with men. Moving from a novice to an expert teacher in their careers demanded that they work together with male colleagues, whether in a public or independent school context. Awesome Annie recalls her engagement with male colleagues:

I am currently the Deputy Principal at an inner-city school in Durban. I lead and advise learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments around me

This role of Awesome Annie can be seen lessening the gender divide (Lorber, 2010). Likewise, Aneesha attended management meetings with male colleagues. Nevertheless, gendered awareness created by family members and the teachings of Holy Scriptures formed the foundation for not always taking up leadership opportunities.

6.5.2 Restrictions in schooling and further studies

As young Muslim girls, we all attended schools. Awesome Annie and Curly Sue's teachers played a pivotal role in encouraging them to study further. However, Muslim women like Aneesha and Countessa's innate desire steered them towards further study. They did not receive any guidance or mentorship from their teachers.

The school guidance counsellors guided Awesome Annie towards further study. She remembers:

My teachers, especially my guidance counsellors, were instrumental in convincing my parents that I should apply to study at a Training College or University.

Tyrer and Ahmad (2006, p. 11) point out that “some women were able to cite one or two teachers or Further Education lecturers who demonstrated high levels of commitment towards students or pointed to examples of university outreach programmes geared towards Muslim women”. Likewise, I gathered that Curly Sue and Awesome Annie’s teachers and mentors were instrumental in enabling them to make choices to study further. Curly Sue reflects on her schooling memories:

My teachers have been a driving force. They were motivated to be outstanding in South Africa’s most profound, darkest days of apartheid rule and motivated us to achieve in an unequal society. They were leaders of note. We had to be well-read, we had to be polished speakers, and we had to prove our mettle in White South Africa.

Curly Sue chose counselling as her career, which could be due to her teachers’ motivation and guidance and her desire to empower other women. She recalls:

I took on many leadership roles within my professional capacities, such as guidance counsellor. As a school counsellor, I had experienced leadership within this portfolio. I set up support groups.

Through the stories, I realised that teachers’ and school counsellors’ guidance can be instrumental in gearing Muslim females towards studying to take up a career. Archard (2013) supports this mentorship, pointing out a need for female mentors and role models for girls. Therefore, I perceived mentorship and role models’ value to develop female Muslim leaders within the personal and professional spheres. I also understood that leadership interest must be instilled in girls early (Archard, 2013).

In reflecting on the participants’ experiences, mixing between males and females was always a point to be considered in schooling and education. This is a determining factor within Muslim homes that has prevented many parents from sending their girls to study. Through the stories, it became clear to me that many parents were orthodox to an extent as they did not promote the intermingling of the sexes. For example, Curly Sue attended a girls-only High School:

I attended a girls-only school in the heart of the Casbah and dressed in the necessary school uniform.

Similarly, Countessa attended a girls' school:

I attended a girls-only ex-model C school (a government school is administrated and funded by a governing body and alumni)

Curly Sue and Countessa attended female-only schools, as their parents did not favour mixing the sexes. This was not an accepted practice in the Muslim religion once a girl reaches *baligh* (puberty). From Countessa's and Curly Sue's stories, I understood that their educational experiences were determined by their family's culture, religion and gendered expectations (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010). Yousafzai (2014), in her autobiography, highlights how the girls in Pakistan were cursed for attending school and were told that they would go to hell by being educated. I realised that our opportunities in receiving an education were dependent upon our homes, the society we lived in, and our heritage as Muslim female teachers (Ahmad, 2001).

Countessa reflected on how she began studying teaching:

I applied for various courses, and teaching was one of the options. I only got into teaching for fear of not studying at all. I liked kids because mummy had a crèche. I needed to go to university because of watching both my parents work so hard.

From the stories, it became clear that specific restrictions were placed on the choice of career paths for the participants; however, it must be noted that the encouragement towards having any professional career can be seen as promoting female leadership. These participants were given the means of being financially independent through their entry into the professional world. Lorber (2010, p. 2), in her study on gender inequality, pointed out that "women were given a chance for economic independence, these rights were vital for raising married women's status from childlike dependence to one of independence". From this, I realised that developing financial independence can strengthen Muslim females' ability to enact leadership as mature women.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that more parents are encouraging their girl children to think about prospective careers. Shapira et al. (2011, p.3) stated that in their study that "a prominent common element of their narratives is that despite immense differences in family background,

these women had all been pushed and encouraged towards leadership since childhood”. The stories highlight that we should not limit their career choices based on men’s perception and marriage, and we should not put pressure on unmarried girls to marry or put their careers on the back-burners.

In my view, all Muslim families should encourage young girls and women with their career choices. Furthermore, families should not prioritise only their sons as providers (Ahmad, 2001); girls should be considered enablers and leaders within and beyond the home. Furthermore, Shapira et al. (2011, p. 38) argue that the “support of a male figure and the father’s authorization” are essential for women’s leadership. I also realised that support from fathers, brothers and other male heads was necessary.

From the participants’ stories, it is essential to note that these Muslim female teachers overcame the challenges they faced and enacted leadership in their professional spheres despite restrictions being placed on them. I also understood that women like Countessa, Curly Sue, Aneesha and Awesome Annie had much to offer within their personal and professional spheres; therefore, we need to develop leadership amongst Muslim female teachers like them (Mogadime et al., 2010).

6.5.3 Restrictions in socialising

The stories portray how from childhood to adulthood, restrictions were placed upon social engagements. Aneesha recalls the limitations placed upon her:

Socialising with friends from different religious backgrounds was haram (forbidden), especially with boys. Our parents believed that we would go astray if we socialised with friends who did not belong to the same faith. But, I was allowed to socialise with my primary and high school girlfriends who were not Muslims. They were allowed to come over to my house, but I could not go to their homes until I was in my final year of high school. My dad probably changed his attitude towards his upbringing method, or probably he was experiencing an intergenerational change in attitudes about bringing up girls.

Thus socialising with friends was monitored for Aneesha. From this, I understood how patriarchy manifested itself in our choice of friends and how the patriarchs within our families were often rigid in this regard, particularly concerning the sexes’ unregulated intermingling. Similarly, Ijaz and Abbas (2010, p. 319), in their study on the education of young British Muslims, stated that parents did not want a schooling context where “boys and girls mix openly, as this was against

their religious and cultural beliefs, particularly when puberty sets in”. Aneesha remembers her family’s warnings about socialising:

I was allowed to go on outings with my girlfriends (with limitations of not attending any afternoon or evening social activities). Going out with boys was not permissible.

Similarly, Awesome Annie recalls how she was restricted in her engagements with her friends as she reached puberty:

Girls are taught to dress in hijab (headscarf and loose outer garments) and to be cautious around the opposite gender, hugging and kissing the opposite gender.

Aneesha and Awesome Annie’s curtailed freedom with friends and boys significantly impacted their leadership development. This decreased socialisation was always considered in their later engagement with men and women of all religious groups, which affected Awesome Annie’s decisions in enacting leadership:

I was reluctant to take on the opportunities as it involved going for meetings at odd times of the afternoon and evenings, and I had to be home by Magrib (sunset-prayer). As a girl, engaging in social activities besides going to a religious gathering was forbidden. As a result of my upbringing, I was always aware of what was allowed and what was not, for a Muslim girl. I didn’t feel left out as I knew my boundaries and didn’t bother to become a leader.

Contrary to the experiences of Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha, Countessa recalls how she played freely with the children in her neighbourhood:

My neighbourhood was very community orientated. I played on the streets with other children from my neighbourhood. We all knew each other and each other’s families. I didn’t see the difference between my friend’s religion and culture and my own. We bonded well with each other. Neighbours invited each other for meals and reprimanded us if the need arose. We were children who belonged to our closely-knit community.

From Countessa’s story, I grasped how free she was as a young Muslim girl. Similarly, Hyvärinen and Uusiautti (2014, p. 1731) point out in their study that “the interviews revealed that the

relationship between the female leaders' childhood homes and their surrounding communities was very open. From a child's perspective, activities were communal and playing with other children was extremely free. Families had good social networks". Hence Countessa developed good social skills from socialising with other children in her neighbourhood, which contributed towards her leadership abilities within her personal and professional spheres.

In the participants' stories, a 'Mahram' (protector or chaperone) was always considered necessary. As a Muslim woman, you were not allowed to be with a male who was not your 'Mahram', which affected the participants' relationship with men and boys from childhood until the present, and often impacted leadership opportunities within their personal sphere. Furthermore, this relationship with boys affected their relationships with men in their professional sphere. Aneesha recalled her social interactions at management meetings:

Recently, all women in the team were asked not to sit near the men. This action made us uncomfortable, but our sentiments were considered unimportant. At some meetings, there is a Pardah (veil) separating males from females.

The separation seemed to be the first roadblock in embracing leadership, as our potential as Muslim female teachers was not even recognised. Patriarchy undermined the powers of Muslim female teachers like Aneesha.

Similarly, Aneesha recalled her childhood:

As a young girl, I was not allowed the freedom to play with friends after school, as attending madrassa was compulsory. We attended separate classes for boys and girls. Boys went to Mosque for their salaah (prayers), and girls and women prayed at home as they were not allowed in the mosque.

Awesome Annie and Aneesha fought social barriers in interacting with males, which were put in place by male school heads, and continually endeavoured to embrace leadership opportunities.

6.6 Not speaking up

As young and old Muslim women, our engagement, experiences and life history have been instrumental in the way people have treated and judged us. This has also contributed to the Muslim female teachers not speaking up within the personal sphere. The participants' experiences portray

how their lack of confidence in speaking up came about because of how the patriarchs and matriarchs treated them. This also impacted their self-esteem.

6.6.1 Restriction of our voices

As Muslim women, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha often experienced great difficulty speaking their minds. I understood that listening to the participants' voices through their stories was an essential element of understanding their leadership joys and sorrows; therefore, these voices could not be ignored (Mario, 2015). Women should be encouraged to speak up for what they deem to be morally correct (Adichie, 2015). However, this often does not occur; as Curly Sue recalls how her ability to express herself in the personal sphere was restricted:

My father was the only adult male; whose word was final. You did not question it, and we were not encouraged to do so. I was always seen as a rebel. Male relatives, such as uncles, relegated and dictated how we dressed and behaved, especially our voices, which were not to be heard.

Similarly, Aneesha remembers her relationship with male colleagues at school:

During meetings with joint management, women's voices in the management team were often selectively heard and very rarely considered important.

From Aneesha's story, it is important to note how her voice within her professional sphere was silenced. Similarly, the women in Adichie's study (2015) felt ignored when making pertinent suggestions in meetings. The men, on the other hand, were praised for their comments. Adichie (2015) asserts that women need to stand against gender discrimination within both the personal and professional spheres, as personal experiences affect the professional. However, for Aneesha, this could not happen as the male heads ruled. This kind of silencing took place because of the patriarchy imposed on Aneesha, who felt unable to speak up for herself. Khalil and DeCuir (2018) state that these patriarchal silences impact women's leadership within the personal and professional spheres. I imagine that Aneesha was too intimidated to speak up for herself and other Muslim female teachers.

Furthermore, Awesome Annie recalls how she was not allowed to express her feeling about school:

I often went home complaining about school, and my father used to say 'I am tired of you complaining, either resign or think why you were placed in that context'.

Through Awesome Annie's father's reaction, I came to realise that as women, we were not allowed to complain; we were socialised into accepting whatever happened.

Contrary to these silences, we have Countessa - who dared to express her thoughts. She was the youngest, a Muslim female from a new generation. Countessa highlights her readiness to express her thoughts:

I am a very outspoken person, and I sometimes find myself in a fix because I don't know how to express myself appropriately without getting emotional or sounding rude.

Countessa further recounts how her self-expression gets her 'in trouble':

From my own experience, I consider watching my words as being very important. I have a 'big mouth'. I do not think when I talk and often end up in trouble for saying the wrong things. I have a tendency to speak my mind

Countessa's openness in expressing herself often got her into trouble, as this was not regarded as becoming of a decent Muslim woman.

In the workplace, Muslim men often do not take kindly to instructions from females. As a female teacher leader, we have these experiences because some Muslim men have the perception that they are superior to women. Similarly, Adichie (2015, p.20) points out that men did not kindly receive instructions from a woman manager (especially one that demanded accountability). Furthermore, Adichie (2015) emphasises how women felt ignored when making pertinent suggestions in meetings. The men, on the other hand, were praised for their comments. Similarly, my participants and I experienced such incidents in all our engagement with men during professional meetings.

The men seemed to feel that women should have a soft touch. The combination of their male ego and not allowing the women in their homes to speak up for themselves continue to impact their relationship with Muslim female teachers like Aneesha. Of note is Aneesha's recollection of a conversation with a male manager who conveyed that:

He had asked the junior male teachers not to take instructions from senior female Heads of Departments like myself.

It seems that Aneesha did not challenge this, once again silencing her voice against the oppressive nature of men towards Muslim female teachers like herself in leadership. There was a certain level of choice for all the participants as adults, but this was not fully realised because of the social construction of female identity. Women are seen as less than men - less capable, less trustworthy and less sensible.

In my view, expressing ourselves through our own voices is an essential element in developing leadership. I understood that “leadership behaviour was an act of doing and working with others and often involved being a voice for others” (Archard, 2013, p. 58). From this, I understood that expressing ourselves as Muslim female teachers enhances the qualities of “motivation, influence, inspiration, and encouragement” (Archard, 2013, p. 58). Furthermore, Archard (2013, p. 60) highlights that “leadership involved having a voice and being a voice for others”. Hence speaking up for ourselves and not being silenced is a critical aspect of leadership for Muslim women like Curly Sue, Aneesha, Awesome Annie and Countessa.

Through their stories, the participant revealed their paths in enacting leadership within and beyond their personal spheres. In embracing any leadership that unfolded, each participant resonated with strong beliefs of the Quran and Sunnah (Prophetic way of life). Every accomplishment was based on the values portrayed in the religious scriptures. Furthermore, in my view, Muslim men need to reskill themselves with the Quran and Sunnah’s teachings to bring about an evolution in how they treat Muslim women and support their leadership within and beyond the personal sphere.

6.7 Conclusion

The participants came from various backgrounds, some less advantaged, and others more advantaged, with varied family structures and ways of life. However, due to a change in how their parents viewed life, all four women broke barriers by becoming educated professionals.

The participants’ personal experiences and priorities impacted their leadership development. Through negotiations and compromises with family members, the participants developed perseverance, grit, determination, and empathy, vital in enacting leadership.

From the stories of the Muslim female participants' life experiences as daughters, mothers, wives, students, and teachers, I recognised how tensions and restrictions within personal spaces featured strongly and influenced their professional experiences.

In the next chapter, Chapter Seven, I respond to the second part of the first research question, sub-question, 1b): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?* I once again re-examine the participants' experiences as portrayed in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER SEVEN: OUR EXPERIENCES OF ENACTING LEADERSHIP AS MUSLIM FEMALE TEACHERS WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL SPHERE

7.1 Introduction

This collaborative self-study focuses on exploring Muslim female teachers' leadership. In the previous chapter, Chapter Six, I responded to the first part of research question 1, sub-question 1a): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?* I focused on how personal experiences impacted our leadership development as Muslim girls and women.

In this chapter, Chapter Seven, I engage with the second part of the first research question that informs my study, sub-question, 1b): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?* This question allowed me to explore our professional experiences of leadership as Muslim female teachers. I re-examined our experiences within the stories portrayed in Chapters Four and Five and engaged in what Polkinghorne (1995) refers to as an analysis of narratives to answer this research question.

In this chapter, I highlight the different areas within the professional sphere in which the participants enacted leadership. I begin by describing leadership in the classroom. Then, I contemplate leadership in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, leading in in-service education within the school, participating in teacher performance evaluation, leadership in whole-school development, leadership beyond the school and into the community. Finally, I consider differences between participants' leadership experiences in independent and public schools.

7.2 Leadership in the classroom

Drawing on Grant's model of teacher leadership, I present evidence from the stories of teacher leadership in the classroom under two sub-themes. The first is *continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching*, which according to Grant (2009), is about being the expert teacher within the classroom, continually engaging with learners and keeping in mind the latest methodology innovations. The teacher also engages in effective classroom management, including pastoral care, managing learners' behaviour, assessment, and conducting further research to improve teaching and enhance learners' performance. The second theme is *improving one's own teaching by*

engaging in postgraduate studies. This involves teachers engaging in continued professional development by studying, and sharing this new knowledge with others. It is also characterised by teachers' innate desire to re-professionalise themselves to improve their learning and improve student learning. I present each theme together with relevant supporting data from the participants' stories.

7.2.1 Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching

In the narratives, I saw how each participant continued to teach and enhance her teaching. In this section, I focus on the centrality of expert practices, designing learning activities and improvisation or appropriate use of resources, innovative processes of record-keeping and reflective practice, evidence of pastoral care, and keeping abreast of new developments.

7.2.1.1 The centrality of expert practices

Aneesha optimised opportunities to take learning out of the classroom and into a public space (outside her classroom door, where she could watch the learners play), making learning informal and improving it (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011). In her narrative, Aneesha's voice displayed an excitement about her abilities to enhance her learners' education through planning exciting activities, which she explained as follows:

I took teaching and learning outside the classroom by arranging displays and outdoor curricular activities like using water-play (pouring and filling containers) for Math lessons, allowing learners to understand concepts like measurement.

I conducted remedial classes in the afternoons to help learners who struggled to understand concepts.

Countessa also took advantage of the secluded space within her classroom's confines to showcase her talents. Grant (2009) reinforces this by saying that the classroom is often a private space where teachers have relative freedom as they only interact with the learners. Teachers are generally at liberty to lead as they see fit within the classroom. Countessa was able to unleash her creativity within this domain, and she described it as follows:

I am well prepared for my lessons and plan with lots of innovative and new ideas focusing on teaching basics, using lots of resources like counters and flashcards to teach reading, problem-solving and computation during Math.

Countessa further used her expertise to demonstrate her practice's strength within the classroom to "benefit of her learners" (Naicker et al., 2016, p. 4). Countessa goes on to elaborate on how she began to focus on the different learning abilities and learning styles of learners within her classroom:

Although my school is a mainstream school, we take learners with learning problems such as ADD (attention deficit disorder) and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

I am more confident in trying new ideas. I spend time making teaching and learning resources.

Countessa's efforts are strongly supported by Education White Paper Six (Department of Education, 2001, p. 4). The South African Government is determined to create "special needs education as a non-racial and integrated component of our education system". Countessa further highlighted the following:

I have learnt to change my methodology, especially moving away from bookwork and rote learning. I plan learner-centred lessons that focus on the learners being actively involved. I now work together with the children around me. I afford them the one on one interaction.

Thus, Countessa changed her teaching strategies to cater to inclusivity. Countessa's ability to teach her learners by being 'hands-on' in her lessons is closely linked to what Paris and Combs (2006) highlight as the importance of teachers moving away from teacher-centred pedagogy to learner-centeredness. Countessa also used the latest technology as part of her repertoire, which she described as follows:

I now use iPads to teach Math and English, making it exciting and hands-on for my learners. Ensuring the design and layout of furniture in the iPad room is now

my responsibility. I took advantage of using technology and created a video for learners to learn to spell using PowerPoint.

Countessa's ability to use technology such as iPads to enhance teaching and learning in her classroom made learning fun and interesting for her learners. She was the master of her class, and especially in using selected digital resources and learner-centred activities. The value of Countessa's digital learning expertise is reaffirmed by the Professional Development Framework for Digital Learning of the Department of Education (2018), whose action plan is to improve teaching and learning using digital resources. She took advantage of opportunities to re-professionalise with digital technology for the benefit of her learners. Countessa's 'expertise' in technology was due to her innate desire and commitment to re-professionalise herself. Day and Gu (2007) further highlight that principals and other staff should foster teachers' professional learning. Countessa was given this opportunity. She embraced it as a means to bring in new pedagogy and develop herself, reinforcing her leadership and becoming a role model for other Muslim female teachers around her (Grant, 2009). From trying out new pedagogies, Countessa developed the leadership qualities of resourcefulness, passion, and the ability to take risks.

On another note, Aneesha and Countessa's stories reflected how some aspects of the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum (the single, comprehensive, and concise policy document for Grades R – 12 for South African schools) were left out by because of their context of Muslim ethos school. The CAPS curriculum implementation was enacted differently in public schools where it was given full articulation, whereas, in independent schools, there was room for modification to suit the context. Countessa elaborated on this:

Teaching subjects like music and performance arts (dance), which is part of the Life Skills curriculum, is forbidden. Drawing of eyes in my art lessons or on my charts was forbidden as it represented a living being.

Likewise, Aneesha relayed her experiences:

I was also forbidden to use resources with the word 'pig' or a picture of a pig, as mentioned in the Quran 2:173 (Chapter 2, verse 173). I had to make sure that the pictures and charts did not have people and animals with eyes, as it was forbidden.

Teaching music and the Life Skills curriculum required Aneesha and Countessa to omit certain aspects. Similarly, in their study Abdalla, Chown and Abdullah (2018) point out that music in Islamic schools focused only on the singing of *nasheeds* (Islamic songs without instruments) and forbade the playing of string instruments; however, use of the *daf* (a large Persian and Arabic frame drum used in popular and classical music) was allowed. Furthermore, Abdalla et al. (2018) stated that Islamic school's art lessons excluded any depiction of the human form. Likewise, Countessa and Aneesha ensured that their teaching and use of resources adhered to their school's Islamic ethos.

Contrary to not being allowed to teach music in her Muslim ethos school, Aneesha recalls how she matriculated with music as one of her subjects:

I was a member of the school music group and always represented the school at functions

From Aneesha's story, I gathered that as a young Muslim girl, her parents were more liberal and allowed her to choose her own subjects. Her pursuit of the recorder as a musical instrument of choice was not considered *haram*.

7.2.1.2 Designing learning activities and improvisation or appropriate use of resources

The designing of learning activities and improvisation or proper use of resources seemed integral to teaching and learning. For example, Curly Sue related:

I spent time making resources to enhance the learners' English skills. I made flashcards, sentence strips and work cards to reinforce their language and reading skills.

Her story revealed what a dedicated teacher Curly Sue was. Phelps (2008, p. 120) described teachers like Curly Sue as "innovators, doers and motivators". Curly Sue's ability to go that extra mile to help her children get a better understanding of English proved how determined she was to enhance teaching and learning within her classroom.

Curly Sue's narrative also reveals challenges in the two schools she worked at. This dual school context of Curly Sue was important in understanding how she overcame her challenges. She described her challenges as a novice teacher in a public school as follows:

In my early years as a teacher, I taught in a school in the heart of Chatsworth, a predominantly Indian suburb (KwaZulu Natal, South Africa). This suburb was home to the poorest of the Indian community. My classroom had a few resources, and I opted not to spend too much money on resources. I feared these being stolen by some of the disadvantaged learners to buy cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.

Curly Sue's description of challenges during her early years as a teacher made me realise how difficult it was for her to teach at a school with limited resources. Curly Sue also elaborated on the various forms of challenges she experienced in her present school:

In my present, multicultural, special needs school, I have many specialised resources (testing and remediation instruments), which I share with colleagues. This sharing of resources makes it very difficult to use the resources for a significant amount of time, impacting the delivery of lessons and independent teaching, which learners with special needs require regularly.

Awesome Annie's public school's funds were minimal, and consequently, teaching and learning resources were not in abundance at the school. Awesome Annie explained that teachers in her public school who could afford to pay for their resources were advantaged in enhancing their classroom environment. Awesome Annie elaborated:

I came from a middle-class family, and because of this, I had a little more disposable income. I used my own money to pay for and make charts, and other resources for my classroom, as resources were limited at my school. Teachers with limited financial resources found it challenging to use their money to make charts to enhance teaching and learning.

From Awesome Annie's story, I saw how the teachers' financial conditions and backgrounds can influence their ability to enact leadership in the classroom (Naicker et al., 2016).

Aneesha and Countessa taught in the same independent school context, which Countessa proudly described as follows:

The school was no ordinary school. It had the most beautiful grounds for sports, an indoor AstroTurf for soccer, beautifully decorated classrooms, specialist rooms

such as a library, smart room, science lab, and an abundance of teacher resource materials, which included computers, iPads and books. This school had a small teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20.

Furthermore, Aneesha pointed out that in this independent school, they also had:

Apple TV, Wi-Fi, TVs in every classroom and up-to-date computers.

I came to understand how fortunate Aneesha and Countessa were in having access to up-to-date resources. I also saw how this context placed high expectations upon the staff to ensure that teaching and learning were par excellence.

7.2.1.3 Innovative processes of record-keeping and reflective practice

From the stories, I understood how much effort went into planning lessons. Awesome Annie recounted her experiences in the planning of lessons, reflection and good record-keeping:

As a young teacher, I spent many hours planning and preparing lessons for my large class. During facilitation, I planned various assessment strategies and tasks, which allowed me to reflect on my teaching. I kept notes and comments about each learner's performance within the classroom for assessments they engaged. Reflecting on my notes allowed me to look at the strengths and weaknesses in my teaching, as well as in the learner's ability to understand concepts.

Awesome Annie's good record keeping and reflection on her practice strengthened her teaching. As Webster-Wright (2009, p. 722) pointed out, "reflection changes experiences into learning which brings about change". The value for teachers like the participants to engage in *mahasabah* (self-reflection) is supported by Abdulla et al. (2018), who argued that this self-reflection enhances teachers' professional practice. These teachers' qualities within their classrooms are reinforced by Naicker et al. (2016, p. 4), who maintain that a "good standard of record keeping and reflective practice, reinforced teacher's expert practice".

7.2.1.4 Evidence of pastoral care role

Awesome Annie recalled how she focused on discipline and building relationships with her learners:

I focused on getting my learners to be well-disciplined and always maintained a close bond with them. We began to understand each other, which made my teaching much more comfortable, as they knew from our relationship that I wanted them to do their best in school.

Awesome Annie's focus on pastoral care made the learners in her class feel safe and fostered a happy classroom and conducive learning environment. Working closely with her learners in pastoral care was essential in enhancing her leadership in teaching. Day and Gu (2007, p. 429) refer to this as "emotional work, which is a necessary condition for learning and development". Furthermore, Naicker et al. (2016, p. 5) allude that being a "good role model" to students has a "positive impact on learning", and this is reflected in Awesome Annie's leadership within her classroom.

Awesome Annie worked in a public school which served a mix of local and foreign learners who belonged to different racial groups. She elaborated on the challenges faced by many learners in her school:

My present school has a student population that comprises of AIDS orphans, foreign learners, street children and many other learners who come from challenging social, emotional and financial backgrounds

This school context was challenging for Awesome Annie as she had to deal with some learners who were undernourished and needed food to concentrate. She described how she went about helping the learners:

I started initiating outreach programmes such as school feeding programmes (where a nutritious meal is provided for the school learners who come from low-income families. These learners are fed daily with a variety of food). I engage with the service providers daily, ensuring the timeous delivery of all meals.

I realised that Awesome Annie helped learners with proper nutrition to improve their well-being and concentration.

Similarly, Curly Sue was instrumental in initiating programmes at her school:

In school, I initiated many clubs such as TADA (teenagers against drugs and alcohol) Group. This programme educated the learners in my school about substance abuse and its impact on their lives, aiming to discourage the learners from this deprived and crowded Indian area.

Curly Sue and Awesome Annie displayed the leadership qualities of finding solutions and negotiation, crucial for providing a safe and comfortable school environment.

Curly Sue also highlighted emotional challenges in her unique context, which she explained as follows:

This school has smaller classes with specialised resources that help teach learners with special needs; however, I experienced huge problems with learners' behaviours. Many students with disabilities got frustrated with school because of not understanding curriculum material or dealing with their emotions, which were not within their control.

I gathered that resources were the only challenge for Curly Sue. Working with special needs learners had its own problems, especially for the learners' individualised teaching and behaviour management in her classroom. Curly Sue's difficulties in both of her teaching contexts intersected when it came to using resources to benefit learners, as her goal was always to uplift her learners in whatever context she taught. She used the availability of specialised resources to meet her learners' needs. Grant et al. (2010) point out that school leaders like Curly Sue see it as their duty to bring about a transformation in their professional sphere.

7.2.1.5 Keeping abreast of new developments

From the stories, I realised that keeping abreast of new developments was necessary for leadership as a Muslim female teacher. I understood how the benefits of a well-resourced school like Aneesha's and Countessa's worked to their advantage. Countessa explained how she took advantage of some new developments in technology provided by her well-resourced school:

I am more confident in trying new ideas. I have completed a First Aid course (paid for by the school).

Furthermore, Aneesha recalled how she kept abreast of new developments in her school by attending a course:

I attended a course on Education, Training and Development Practices-Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA) on mentoring students in the Further Education and Training band. This was run by the Independent Examination Board (IEB). This course was aimed at assisting in the mentorship programme.

From Countessa and Aneesha's explanations of their contexts, it became clear that they were advantaged in some ways by working in their independent schools. Tobias (2012, p. 115) mentions how working in a well-resourced school can allow teachers to "grow and contribute to the growth of the school". Furthermore, Tobias (2012, p. 112) argues that working as a teacher in a well-resourced school "heightened his awareness" towards "meticulous lesson delivery and collaboration". I realised how fortunate Countessa and Aneesha were in some respects.

7.2.2 Improving one's own teaching by engaging in postgraduate studies

Professional development is about "teachers learning, learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their student's growth" (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). Countessa, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha were lifelong learners and continued to upskill and improve their teaching and learning by engaging in postgraduate studies. Countessa's story reveals her desire to continue her education:

I have just finished my Honours in Education and would love to pursue my Masters in Education. I feel very capable of taking on this challenge. I have to better myself by studying, to better myself as a person.

Countessa hopes to register soon to achieve this personal goal of hers. This ongoing battle of finding the time and resources such as money often weighed her down as she dreamt of re-professionalising herself in her quest to further her studies by doing her Master's in Education so that her aspirations in occupying leadership could be achieved.

Aneesha recalled her journey of postgraduate studies:

I have moved from novice to expert as I have re-professionalised my teacher self with a Higher Diploma in Education, Honours Degree and a Master's in Education. I have also taken advantage of other teacher professional development opportunities such as attending workshops, teacher development conferences, and studying towards a PhD.

Aneesha was a lifelong learner. She continued and sustained her professional development from an undergraduate level to the PhD student she is today. This professionalisation was an enabler in her enactment of leadership in teaching and learning processes. Aneesha's studies allowed her to learn "new ways to deliver curriculum and instruction" (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012, p. 242). Aneesha was intrinsically motivated by her desire to give her best to fulfill and enhance teaching and learning. This is exhibited in Aneesha's story when she described her learning through her postgraduate studies:

My journey to better myself through studying has enabled me to bring in new ideas that I discovered through my studies and implement them in the classroom and my school. One example is collaboration through discussion and research in our meetings, which was aimed to improve teaching and learning at school.

In Awesome Annie's narrative, I took note of her desire to complete her PhD, which she described as follows:

I would now like to pursue my PhD involving my school culture, using my firm foundations from my experiences as a deputy principal, because that's where lots of intervention takes place academically and socially. My school's situation is demanding, and a few intervention strategies coming from my research will enhance teaching and learning. I aim to bring about holistic improvement in my school culture.

Awesome Annie seemed driven by her passion for bringing about changes to her professional sphere. She hoped that she would discover some recommendations from her PhD findings to assist in her leadership roles in her public school context.

Curly Sue's narrative also reveals intrinsic motivation for professional development. She moved from being a novice teacher to a now more experienced professional who holds a special needs education PhD. She recalls her inspiration to re-professionalise herself:

I was fuelled by the inspirational ideas of change. Many things influenced and shaped my life story, which was undoubtedly going to impact the positions I assumed in my career path. I wanted an ideal life as a modern-day Muslim woman, a family and an education to free me from the circles of social and cultural impositions. I wanted to be in control of my world, and what better route than academia?

Curly Sue proved to be a brave and motivated woman who triumphed by continuing her postgraduate studies and eventually obtaining her PhD. I saw how hard Curly Sue worked to achieve her PhD. Similarly, Curly Sue's leadership within her professional sphere can be compared to Evans' (2002, p. 124) statement of how one is "transformed from a 'restricted' to an 'extended' professional" through continuing professional learning and development.

The stories revealed how Awesome Annie, Aneesha, Curly Sue, and Countessa kept abreast of new teaching and learning developments by continuing their education in pursuing postgraduate studies. They engaged in studying for senior postgraduate qualifications such as Master's and Doctoral degrees. The participants' efforts are affirmed by Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 233) who described how postgraduate studies can provide teachers with the "primary stimulus for...professional growth". Our studies contributed to us becoming wise, insightful, creative, able to think outside of the box, becoming essential resources to our schools (Naicker et al., 2016).

The stories revealed how we all engaged in postgraduate studies to improve our pedagogy in the classroom. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) acknowledge that teachers' ongoing professional development and learning reinforce teaching and learning in schools. Each of us was a leader within our classroom space. We continued to improve our teaching and learning by engaging with our learners during lessons and involving ourselves in postgraduate studies (Grant, 2009).

Our professional development was intrinsically driven. We worked hard to re-professionalise ourselves, pursuing postgraduate studies, which helped change our practice as teachers. This is in keeping with Wenner and Campbell's (2017) claim that intrinsic motivation leads to better

learning. Professional development was an essential endeavour towards our leadership as Muslim female teachers. From our stories, I also saw that we needed “support and a positive school culture” to support our intrinsically motivated quest for professional development (Webster-Wright, 2009). And, I came to understand that as Muslim female teachers, wanting to enact leadership, we required the merging of our Islamic values and our secular knowledge.

7.3 Leadership in Curricular, Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

Leading in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities within the school was another way the participants demonstrated leadership. They showed this through a) providing curriculum development knowledge to others in the school, b) leading in in-service education, and c) participating in teacher performance evaluation (Grant, 2009).

7.3.1 Providing curriculum development knowledge to others within the school

Providing curriculum development knowledge to others within the school was necessary for the participants, who took the lead in attending workshops and sharing information with staff members. Sharing knowledge with others is referenced in an authentic *hadith* (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 93), where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

Do you know who is most generous? ... God is the Most Generous, then I am most generous to humankind, and the most generous people after me will be those who will acquire knowledge and then disseminate it. (They) will come on the Day of Resurrection singly, like a ruler.

Curly Sue, Countessa, Awesome Annie and Aneesha followed this advice from The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and made every effort in sharing their teaching and learning skills with others in their professional sphere.

The varied, public and independent school contexts influenced our ability to lead in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Wenner and Campbell (2017, p. 158) alludes that being aware of “diversity and equity in schools enabled teacher leaders to develop critical awareness”, which is reflected in Countessa’s story. As she explains:

In my first school, I received many negative comments from a very domineering female teacher. She was very intimidated by my youth. She was threatened by my

new ideas and willingness to bring about change in teaching and learning. She was not Muslim and always passed nasty comments.

From this, I realised how badly Countessa's colleagues in her first school treated her, as she belonged to a minority group of Muslim female teachers. Shapira et al. (2011) highlight that belonging to minority groups can negatively impact leadership. Furthermore, Ryan et al. (2016, p.11) point out that it can be difficult for senior teachers to accept "new or young teachers", as they are considered a threat. Likewise, Countessa elaborates on her difficulty in working with her colleagues in her present independent school context:

I had many exciting ideas that I wanted to try out. Often my ideas are shot down and not even considered. I have a sense that these ideas are getting shot down because it would come off better than that of my coordinator. I also sense that many of the times, this is more personal than professional.

Countessa's endeavour to assist others was also marred by jealousy. Ryan et al. (2016, p. 11) point out that teachers still need to develop strategies to deal with "resentment, resistance and threats" by other female teachers, which Countessa tried to overcome. From Countessa's experiences with other teachers, I understood that support from other women was necessary for her leadership development as a Muslim female teacher (Airini et al., 2010).

7.3.2 Contributing towards curriculum development

Contributing to curriculum development in both independent and public school contexts was no easy task. Sharing their professional knowledge seemed easier for Countessa and Aneesha as their middle-class context supported them in some ways: Aneesha was sent to a conference and Countessa was enabled to champion technology and reading.

Countessa's determination to contribute to curriculum development triumphed, as she showcased her zeal towards excellence in teaching and learning. Countessa remembers how she assisted other teachers with her best practice:

I have taken my mentor's advice and tried to share my best practice with other teachers in my grade team, teaching them to engage actively with teaching and learning using technology.

Countessa's ability to bring about changes in her teaching enabled her to take the 'bull by its horns' and embrace leadership opportunities given to her by her mentor. She engaged in continued dialogue and collaboration by sharing her best practice with her colleagues. Cooperation and exchange are vital elements in pursuit of improved teaching (Grant, 2009). Countessa's continued efforts to embrace leadership opportunities were rewarded as she assisted other teachers with 'technology-driven teaching'. They continually looked for her assistance when faced with issues in integrating technology in their lessons. This assistance provided by Countessa is reaffirmed by Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 233), who highlight that "uncomfortable or risky" work can bring about positive change. However, Countessa could not attend workshops and conferences out of regular school hours, as she had to deal with tensions between her role as a mother and teacher (Priola, 2007).

Curly Sue, as she taught in challenging contexts where great efforts had to be made to enhance teaching and learning. Curly Sue recalls how she contributed towards curriculum development:

I started a successful Psychology Department at a Durban school for learners with special needs. That itself was leadership for me as it allowed other teachers and me to assist learners with special needs, make decisions about casework, and eventually lead this department.

She shared her specialised skills in dealing with these learners with other teachers in her context. In collaboration with other teachers, Curly Sue exhibited the characteristics of sharing her knowledge to better the *ummah* (humanity), an essential principle of Islamic leadership.

Countessa and Curly Sue aimed to develop collaborative working relationships with colleagues in their schools to encourage and facilitate learning. Each wanted to share her ideas with colleagues and hoped that they would share and enhance their work through dialogue. Phelps (2008, p. 201) confirms that teachers should be involved in school leadership through collaboration, by "chairing a committee, leading a faculty or professional development activity, serving as a mentor or demonstrating expertise in instructional and technological skills". Curly Sue, Countessa and Awesome Annie emulated the leadership qualities of excellent communication, facilitation, collaboration, and leading by example.

Furthermore, Curly Sue and Countessa were actively involved in providing curriculum development to others in their school. They shared their knowledge and best practice techniques with colleagues around them, which affirmed the leadership they embraced. The participants also engaged in staff development, assisting other teachers and mentoring new teachers that came to their school. Curly Sue and Awesome Annie were champions of servant leadership. Stephenson et al. (2018, p. 20) point out that “servant leadership is also people-oriented and involve elements of integrity, trust, respect, delegation, vision, and influence”. Therefore, Curly Sue and Awesome Annie put learners and colleagues before themselves within their professional sphere.

7.3.3 Leading co-curricular activities within ones’ school

Co-curricular activities within one’s school involve activities that are associated with what learners’ study at school. These activities are closely aligned with curriculum delivery and often include clubs, debates, exhibitions, and drama productions, usually taking place after school, on the weekends, or during break times. Phelps (2008) is of the view that taking learning outside the classroom motivates learners. Curly Sue was instrumental in initiating co-curricular activities in her school, which took place outside formal teaching and learning hours:

I took on many leadership roles within my professional capacity, such as guidance counsellor. In school, I initiated many clubs such as a float procession and TADA (Teenagers Against Drugs and Alcohol) Group ...As a school counsellor, I had experienced leadership within this portfolio. I set up support groups.

As a young Muslim woman, I had a ‘love affair’ with books. I travelled the world through reading these books. I made many changes in my school, like starting a drama club, as I felt that getting the children involved in drama could enhance their English skills and provide an escape from their social context.

Curly Sue’s ability to initiate co-curricular activities resulted from her endeavours to bring about changes in her learners’ acquisition of knowledge and provide an escape from challenges they might be experiencing in their own homes. Curly Sue took learning outside her classroom and could be seen as an ‘innovator’ Phelps (2008); this author also stated that, as teachers, we must not be tightly bound by textbooks. Curly Sue can be seen as a teacher who acted as a change agent to transform her school by introducing new learning areas, such as performance studies (Sandlin et

al., 2011). In some sense, it was easier for Curly Sue to organise clubs, as her public school did not follow any religious ethos. Furthermore, because Curly Sue taught in a public school, she did not worry too much about her students' intermingling with other students. She did not pay attention as to whether they were Muslim, or male or female. Curly Sue took advantage of this relative freedom to provide leadership opportunities for her learners. By contrast, Abdalla et al., (2018, p. 112) point out that activities involving "public speaking, debating and drama production were constrained" in Islamic ethos schools. From this, I saw how enacting leadership within our varied professional contexts depended on the school ethos, which could restrict or promote our leadership as Muslim female teachers.

7.3.4 Leadership in extracurricular activities within the school

Extracurricular activities within the school often take place outside the school's regular curriculum and are not directly linked to curriculum delivery. These activities take place mainly outdoors and can include sporting activities, learning writing skills, and volunteer work. However, as Abdalla et al. (2018, p. 109) state: "Sport and physical education are deemed contentious issues in Islamic schools because of the dress code". These activities were also reliant on the facilities within contexts. Aneesha and Countessa were fortunate that their independent school context had the luxury of many sporting facilities. They took the lead in coordinating extracurricular activities.

Countessa reflected on how she took the initiative to coordinate the foundation phase swimming gala:

This year I have coordinated the swimming gala because my HoD gave me this opportunity. I used this as a platform to show the teachers in my team my leadership abilities, which involved coordinating events, allocating duties, informing parents about the swimming gala and finally putting it together. To my advantage, the gala was an outstanding success.

In coordinating the swimming gala, she had to make sure that many contentious issues, such as dress code for the learners, male and female coaches for boys and girls, as well as the attendance at the gala by male and female parents, were dealt with.

Similarly, Aneesha recalled how she organised the school fun run:

In school, I was the chief organiser of the school 'fun run', which involved planning the routes, arranging for support from the police and ambulance service, and allocating duties to teachers, together with providing refreshments and medals for the learners.

Countessa and Aneesha showed immense leadership when they embraced the coordination of extracurricular activities, which involved working with other colleagues and learners within the school. These activities included responsibility, negotiation and directing. Muijs and Harris (2007) acknowledge that allowing teachers to organise events such as sports leads to better schools. Accordingly, Countessa and Aneesha engaged in these challenging leadership activities, which strengthened their efforts in organising new activities to enhance their school environment.

7.4 Leading in in-service education within the school

In-service education is closely linked to staff development and is implemented to improve competencies; in this case, teaching and learning, engaging with curriculum, planning, and ultimately delivering lessons to learners. Collaboration between teachers is essential for in-service education to take place.

Awesome Annie recalled her initiatives in education beyond her school when she worked collaboratively with a group of exchange students and her staff:

I was involved in leading and advising learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments.

Grant (2009) points out that sharing and advising colleagues involves working with trust, transparency, and integrity. Awesome Annie took advantage of her ability to work with others. She provided a platform for teachers in her school to feel safe and take necessary risks to improve teaching and learning.

Aneesha also played a pivotal role in being on the Staff Development Workshop committee in her school She explained:

I am also on the school organising committee for organising staff development workshops within my school. Each term, different teams are allowed to plan staff development activities for the teachers within the school.

Furthermore, Countessa was also a forerunner in a reading programme and the Apple Classroom. Countessa's vast knowledge of teaching with technology has forced teachers who once never engaged with her to come to her for assistance. At any level, intimidation makes it difficult for a new teacher like Countessa to prove her worth. However, teachers were forced to seek her support because of the paradigm shift of teaching and learning in her school. Countessa was involved in assisting her fellow teachers with iPad teaching and the implementation of a new reading programme:

I am the facilitator for teachers in the Foundation Phase for Apple Classroom (a powerful iPad app that helps you guide learning, share work, and manage student devices) and a reading programme. The Apple Classroom involves using the iPad (a tablet computer together with apps from the iStore) to facilitate teaching in Mathematics and English in the Foundation Phase. I also troubleshoot when teachers are 'stuck' in delivering lessons using 'Apple Classroom'.

These kinds of efforts to support colleagues' professional learning are commended by Wenner and Campbell (2017, p. 146), stating that "teacher leaders should support professional learning in their schools".

Awesome Annie, Countessa and Aneesha contributed to the upskilling of teachers within their schools. They were instrumental in assisting the school in providing and supporting in-service training. This selfless leadership quality reinforced Countessa and Awesome Annie's leadership potential. Awesome Annie and Countessa took the initiative to assist other teachers in their school and other schools with mentoring, staff development, peer teaching, and other teaching and learning activities that enhanced mutual and peer learning. Each of them played a pivotal role in "leading in-service education and assisting others" (Grant, 2009, p. 86), reinforcing their ability to lead within their professional sphere.

7.5 Participating in teacher performance evaluation

As a leader in her schools, Aneesha engaged in teacher evaluation, peer assessments, moderation of assessments, and reflection on curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Aneesha recalls her role in teacher performance evaluation:

I was involved in managing teaching and learning, staff appraisals and moderation of assessments. My task was to evaluate and develop teachers' classroom management, teaching, resources, lesson planning and record-keeping as well as the moderation of their formal tasks.

Aneesha participated in “performance evaluation of teachers” (Grant, 2009, p. 57), where she sat in on lessons and observed the teaching and appraised teaching by giving comments. Engaging in performance evaluation to improve teaching and learning and the general school environment was an integral leadership function that Aneesha involved herself in; this is supported by Ryan et al. (2016, p. 7) who claim that with “confidence and knowledge about performance-based assessment” teachers are more willing to collaborate with others. Similarly, Aneesha’s confidence and knowledge about teacher performance evaluation helped teachers to benefit from her advice about improving or maintaining their teaching strategies.

7.6 Leadership in whole-school development

Through stories presented in Chapters Four and Chapter Five, I saw evidence of the participants’ leadership in whole-school development and school effectiveness initiatives to enhance teaching and learning in our schools.

Leadership is usually demonstrated in this area when teachers participate in school-level decision making and involve themselves in reviewing school practice (Grant, 2009). Leadership in whole-school development occurs at two levels: a) organising and leading peer reviews of school practice in one’s school; and b) participating in school-level decision making within one’s school. I present each theme together with relevant supporting data from the participants’ stories.

7.6.1 Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice in one’s school

Awesome Annie and Aneesha engaged themselves in “mediation processes, membership of teams, union representatives, whole-school evaluation, fundraising and policy development” (Grant, 2012, p. 58).

Awesome Annie reflects on her contributions as a novice teacher:

I got involved in union matters. I was a union representative and an active member of different committees, etc. as I enjoyed having an opportunity to share and grow.

Aneesha was also involved in whole-school evaluation within her school:

I also assisted my school in getting accreditation with Umalusi (a board monitoring teaching and learning standards). This involved monitoring and evaluating the school on criteria that included teaching and learning, infrastructure, policies, leadership and governance. I worked with a team to ensure that the school fulfilled the requirements of Umalusi.

Contributing to whole-school evaluation clearly showed the leadership ability of Awesome Annie and Aneesha. Awesome Annie's capability to involve herself in union matters displayed her confidence in sharing, collaboration, excellent communication, and developing others around her. Also, Aneesha's involvement in helping her school obtain Umalusi accreditation re-affirmed her potential as a developing Muslim female leader.

Countessa was actively involved in taking charge of her novice school's Debs Ball, which formed part of a fundraising activity for the school, and also taught social skills to learners:

I was the coordinator of the school's Debs Ball (formal ball for students in their final year of primary or secondary school where boys and girls participated). I was responsible for everything. It was a big challenge at times because I had to collect money and keep invoices.

Through my engagement with the Quran's teachings, I realised that an activity like a Debs Ball is considered *haram* as it promoted the intermingling of sexes together with music and dance (Abdalla et al., 2018). In my understanding, this act of Countessa was due to her ignorance of this.

7.6.2 Participating in school-level decision making within one's own school

From the stories, I saw that participating in school-level decision making within one's school was important. Leadership is usually demonstrated in this area when teachers "participate in school level decision making and involve themselves in reviewing school practice" (Grant, 2009, p. 87).

7.6.2.1 Assisting the school governing body within one's own school

Curly Sue, Aneesha and Countessa did not play any role within the governing body of their schools. They did not seek any opportunity to be part of the school governing body. In my view, this inability to engage in a public platform was determined by the participants' religion and

patriarchy. They were steeped in them expected forms of behaviour (not working late nights, no intermingling of genders, and family responsibilities), which limited them as Muslim female teachers from enacting leadership on a public platform (Shapira et al., 2011). Contrary to this, Awesome Annie was required to present herself at governing body meetings as she was the Deputy Principal of her school.

7.7 Leadership beyond the school and into the community

Leadership beyond the school and into the community involves “community life and cross school networking” (Grant, 2009, p. 59), which provides curriculum knowledge to other schools and leads in-service education by assisting other teachers. Wenner and Campbell (p. 140, 2017) reinforce this by saying that teacher leadership is also responsible for influencing the “entire school, the community and the profession”.

7.7.1 Providing curriculum knowledge to other schools

Providing curriculum knowledge to other schools was an essential element of teacher leadership that Aneesha engaged in:

I facilitated the OBE (Outcomes-Based Education and the foundations for learning) curriculum for the DoE in the Umlazi district...I conducted several workshops for the AMS Schools [Association of Muslim Schools].

Aneesha’s continued desire to upskill her curriculum knowledge contributed to her willingness and confidence to share and assist other teachers with best practices to improve their existing curriculum knowledge. Her ability to work together with other female teachers ensured collaboration towards providing curriculum knowledge to other schools (Spillane et al., 2001).

Furthermore, Aneesha remembers how she mentored a university student teacher who was allocated to her by school management:

I was selected from 15 teachers to mentor an ex-learner from our school, who embarked on a B.Ed. degree. During this period, I attended and completed a course on Education, Training and Development Practices-Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA) on mentoring students in the Further Education and

Training band. This was run by the Independent Examination Board (IEB). This course was aimed at assisting in the mentorship.

Aneesha's mentorship involved working closely with her student. This mentorship initiative is closely linked to Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012, p. 253) sphere three, including "sharing ideas with others, coach or mentor others", which Aneesha successfully embraced.

Likewise, Curly Sue played a pivotal role in assisting teachers within and outside of her context:

I have now started to present workshops to teachers who need help identifying learners with special educational needs such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy and attention deficit. Many schools ask for assistance at staff development workshops.

Curly Sue's ability to share her expertise with others was essential to many teachers around her, who could not deal with special needs learners. Ryan et al. (2016) support this idea of sharing, as they mentioned that by sharing, listening, helping and working with others, teachers learn best. This sharing of pedagogy enhanced school performance.

7.7.2 Leading in in-service education by assisting other teachers

Countessa, Curly Sue and Awesome Annie were not instrumental in establishing "networks beyond the school, promoting inter-school partnerships and creating cluster, circuit and district forums" (Grant, 2009, p. 87). This kind of far-reaching leadership depends on all stakeholders' collaboration to support the development of Muslim female teacher leadership (Spillane et al., 2001).

Nonetheless, Awesome Annie recalls how she contributed to curriculum development and other programmes in the confines of her school:

I lead and advise learners, teachers and other Heads of Departments around me. I started blossoming and began writing Foundation Phase books for a local publishing company. I believe in servant leadership, and I work with my teachers.

As Awesome Annie recalled her contributions, she represented a Muslim female who had a clear vision of sharing her knowledge to empower other females around her, who would, in turn, make a difference within their personal and professional spheres:

I am influencing a lot of young upcoming Muslim women-in my school. There are a lot of Muslim refugees in my school. Their mothers often come into school as well. I often engage in counselling and support them on coping with life, especially equipping them with parenting skills.

Furthermore, Awesome Annie actively initiated school-wide activities:

I started initiating outreach programmes such as school feeding programmes, student exchange programmes and many other exciting programmes.

Furthermore, Aneesha remembers how she was instrumental in assisting teachers outside her school:

I was appointed as Foundation Phase coordinator for the AMS Schools [Association of Muslim School]. This involved networking with the AMS (Durban) schools, arranging cluster meetings, assisting with curriculum and testing issues and keeping the Foundation Phase teachers informed about curriculum changes. I was also involved in Curriculum development at the AMS (National) level.

In her story, Aneesha also reveals how she attended a conference and goes on to elaborate:

In 2014, for the first time in the history of our Muslim independent school in South Africa, a colleague and myself attended the Annual Women's Leadership Conference in Gauteng. When I got back, I shared the highlights of the conference with management members and my staff.

Accordingly, Phelps (2008) highlights that teachers can support curriculum development by attending workshops and conferences and being more collaborative, precisely what Aneesha did. She left the comfort of her private sphere. She participated in a conference in the broader professional sphere, which reaffirmed her leadership abilities and her ability to empower other teachers in her school by sharing the latest teaching and learning trends. In attending this conference, she broke stereotypes instilled by her community, as well as some travel rules indicated by the teachings of the Quran.

Additionally, Aneesha embraced the opportunity to present at a conference:

I assisted the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) Conference by being a guest presenter at the conference and facilitator for the foundation phase.

Aneesha took the leap to attend and present at the conference. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) believe that teachers should be encouraged to participate in conferences and present at these conferences.

Partaking in these leadership activities enabled Aneesha and Awesome Annie to develop working relationships with colleagues in and out of school, as well as parents in their professional contexts.

7.8 How different is leadership in independent and public schools?

Our stories revealed that teacher leadership experiences varied concerning our different school contexts, as the organisational territory and composition were important (Keegin, Stuhlmacher & Cotton, 2017). As teachers in diverse and continually changing contexts, we face challenges regarding “expectations, behaviours and norms” that need to change to suit the learners and teaching contexts (Day & Gu, 2007, p. 424). Within these continually improving contexts, teacher leadership is influenced, shaped and re-shaped, bringing about change (Grant, 2012).

Aneesha and Countessa taught in the same independent school context. I realised that working in a context like that of Aneesha and Countessa had its own pressures. Nieto (2003, p. 124) points out how “accountability to parents and administrators increased pressure for teachers”. According to Nieto (2003, p.125), this accountability brings with it questions of “what is being done, what has been done and what is intended to be done for the benefit of the parents?” The increasing demands from parents demanded that Aneesha up her game in giving of her best. She was required to continually keep her learners’ parents informed of her teaching and learning intentions with the learners in her class. This was combined with many academic excellence demands, which impacted Aneesha’s identity as a teacher and manager, and brought frustration and emotional stress.

Although Countessa and Aneesha had the luxury of working in a privileged context, they also faced many barriers within this Muslim context. This is because it controlled their actions, behaviour and identity as Muslim female teachers, to the extent that this professional context constrained their leadership.

From the stories, I also realised that our engagements and dispositions as Muslim female teachers in our unique settings shaped our leadership trajectories. I also came to understand that our leadership within our independent and public school contexts depended on the Quran's teachings, as each participant wanted to imbibe the qualities of sound ethics and morals in her leadership practice (Shah, 2006).

Our stories revealed how different our school contexts were and how Curly Sue and Awesome Annie made the best of their situations in improving teaching and learning despite a lack of material resources in their schools. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, p. 240) allude that working in challenging environments can “strengthen professional knowledge”, allowing teachers to take risks in supporting student learning, and this is what Annie and Curly Sue embarked on.

As teachers in our changing political climate, it is essential to reflect on the continually changing education system in South Africa. Day and Gu (2007, p. 424) point out that the “realities of teaching are dominated by persisting government policy reforms”. Furthermore, Tobias (2012, p. 105) argues that the transformation of South Africa from an apartheid regime to a democratic state encouraged him to be an agent of change from “despair to optimism”. The same can be said for Awesome Annie, who tried to change things in her context by providing proper nutrition for her learners.

From the stories, I realised that although we engaged in teaching and reinventing our expertise, we faced barriers in implementing and aligning aspects of the curriculum because of our schools' ethos and beliefs. Our lives as Muslim female teachers intersected with the CAPS curriculum's interpretation and implementation and the Quran's teachings. We all understood the meaning of both the CAPS curriculum and the Quran; however, each of us integrated them differently to suit the learners' needs in our independent and public school context. Aneesha and Countessa felt constrained because they were forced to adhere to their school's religious ethos. Naicker et al. (2016, p. 2) point out that these constraints are caused by “mechanisms” such as “culture and religion”, which are deeply embedded in Aneesha and Countessa's organisation. For example, Aneesha and Countessa were very cautious about what texts they made available to learners within their classrooms. Books that portrayed HIV, sexual relationships, homosexuality, drugs, alcohol, gambling and alcohol had to be avoided. These issues were deemed too sensitive for Muslim

learners within their school (Abdalla et al., 2018). It was in the teachers' best interest to avoid such topics.

7.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on our experiences of enacting leadership in the professional sphere. I highlighted teacher leadership and our school context, leadership in the classroom, leadership in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and leadership beyond the school and into the community.

From careful contemplation of the participants' stories, it is clear that each of them possessed leadership attributes, which enhanced their leadership within the professional sphere. Each had the quality of perseverance, a desire for knowledge acquisition, and personal motivation to lead.

As Muslim female teachers, re-professionalising was a vital journey they undertook. They needed to prove to others in their independent and public school contexts that stereotyping of Muslim female teachers needed to be broken and that they needed to be recognised for their leadership capabilities. The stories revealed that their identities as strong Muslim female teachers contributed to their leadership within the professional sphere.

However, for women like Awesome Annie, Curly Sue, Countessa and Aneesha to lead within their professional spaces, they needed to deal with challenges and close the gap on existing stereotypical behaviours and restrictions that prevent or constrain Muslim female teachers' leadership. This change in direction should begin within the classroom and transition to other professional areas to prioritise across-the-board female leadership.

The stories also showed how the participants aimed to enact leadership using the teachings of Holy Scriptures. They wanted to be responsible leaders who worked collaboratively with a vision and purpose (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). As Muslim female teachers, each wanted to be "khalifa, ra'in, and amir" (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, p. 56), terms associated with leadership, where we aim to do good in all our endeavours of enacting leadership. Their experiences within their public and independent school contexts developed the qualities of ethical conduct, consultation, collaboration, accountability, reflection, and enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, which are critical components of leadership.

In the next chapter, Chapter Eight, I offer a review of this thesis and consolidate my learning. I also address the final research question underpinning this collaborative self-study: *What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership?* In answering this question, I reconsider our personal and professional experiences to look at the options for strengthening Muslim female teacher leadership. I then highlight the contributions of this study. Lastly, I provide an overall conclusion.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONSOLIDATING MY COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY AND THE LESSONS LEARNT

8.1 Introduction

In this collaborative self-study, I, a Muslim female teacher and HoD, worked together with three other Muslim female teachers to better understand our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership. To achieve my purpose, I explored our past and present lived experiences within personal and professional spheres.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Seven, I addressed the sub-research question 1b): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?* I explored our experiences of practising leadership as Muslim female teachers within professional spaces.

In this concluding chapter, I begin by presenting a review of this thesis, providing a synopsis of each chapter. I then consolidate my personal and professional learnings. I go on to address the second research question: *What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers' experiences of enacting leadership?* I describe the contributions of this study and offer an overall conclusion.

8.2 Review of the thesis

In Chapter One, I clarified how this collaborative self-study came into being. I described the personal, religious, literature-based and professional rationale. I then outlined the research questions that guided this study. After that, I introduced the fundamental concepts of leadership, women's leadership, Muslim women and leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership that underpinned this study. I then described the five methodological components of self-study research. I concluded Chapter One with an overview of the thesis.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the conceptions and contestations of leadership and some frameworks of leadership. I considered the term *leadership* and related concepts, such as leadership and change, collaboration and vision, influence and ethics. I then explained the relationship between leadership and management. I further clarified the metatheoretical positioning of leadership, as well as leadership from an Islamic perspective, women and leadership, together with feminism and its

impact on women's leadership. I elucidated how I decided to adopt a combination of humanistic, instrumental, and critical leadership positions to gain a multifaceted understanding of Muslim women's leadership. I also clarified context-responsive leadership. I pondered how contextual factors (such as geographical location, infrastructure, culture, religious practices, financial status and political influence) might affect women's leadership. I also considered how the teachings of the Quran and other holy Scriptures might impact Muslim female teacher leadership. I further discussed challenges women face in taking on leadership roles and that for Muslim women, in particular, leadership is complicated by religion, culture and patriarchy. I concluded this chapter by explaining teacher leadership and my rationale for using Grant's (2010) teacher leadership model. I explained how, to understand Muslim female teacher leadership, I would pay attention to leadership in the personal and professional spheres.

In Chapter Three, I focused on the research process. I described the research participants, the need for anonymity and the pseudonyms given to each one of them. I also indicated the participants' teaching contexts. I clarified how my critical friends contributed to this study. I explained the data generation strategies and the use of journal writing, memory drawing, collage creation, story writing, letter writing, and audio recording. I explained how journal entries, story writing, collage making and drawings allowed the participants to express their leadership-related experiences. These creative, hands-on activities brought out memories of experiences. Furthermore, I pointed out the need for care and sensitivity during this study, as it involved vulnerable participants. The chapter highlighted trustworthiness and dealing with ethical issues, which were vital in this study that dealt with marginalised women and Muslim women. This chapter revealed how, as an insider researcher, my insights and patience aided the data generation.

Chapter Four addressed the first research question: *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership?* In this chapter, I presented the narratives of two participants, Curly Sue and Awesome Annie, constructed from short stories, drawings, journal entries, collages and letters. Both Curly Sue and Awesome Annie taught in public schools. Their lives started in the 1960s and underwent some dramatic changes during their experiences from childhood to the present day. The stories revealed how family, culture, religion, gendered socialisation, and societal expectations can influence Muslim female teacher leadership.

Chapter Five portrayed the narratives of Aneesha and Countessa, who both taught in an independent school. Aneesha's life began in the 1960s and Countessa's in the 1980s. Due to the age difference, their stories differed in some respects. However, both narratives showed how their personal lives, culture, traditions, religion and professional experiences as teachers contributed towards their leadership experiences.

In Chapter Six, I analysed the narratives to respond to sub-question 1a): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the personal sphere?* In re-examining the Muslim female teacher participants' stories, I saw the impact of leadership within the home, which involved caregiving and engaging in domestic roles. The narratives also reflected tensions that the participants experienced concerning seeking permission, decision-making about dress, decision-making in marriage, restrictions in education and socialising, and self-expression. From the stories of the Muslim female participants' life experiences, I recognised how tensions and restrictions within personal spaces featured powerfully and had a bearing on their professional lives and selves.

Continuing the analysis, in Chapter Seven, I responded to sub-question 1b): *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership in the professional sphere?* In this chapter, I analysed the stories of leadership experiences as teachers. I emphasised teacher leadership and school context, leadership in the classroom, leadership in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and leadership beyond the school and into the community. I drew attention to how each participant lead by teaching and continually enhancing her teaching, by engaging in expert practices, designing learning activities and improvisation or appropriate use of resources, innovative processes of record-keeping and reflective practice, evidence of pastoral care, and keeping abreast of new developments. I also emphasised how Countessa, Curly Sue, Awesome Annie and Aneesha were lifelong learners who sought to improve their teaching through postgraduate studies. Leading in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities within the school was another means by which the participants demonstrated leadership. The stories also showed how the participants aimed to enact leadership using the teachings of Holy Scriptures. However, despite all their achievements, performing leadership in the professional sphere was problematic, as participants faced obstacles from colleagues, managers, as well as cultural, religious and societal expectations and restrictions. Moreover, Chapter Seven highlighted the leadership of Muslim female teachers going beyond the school and into the community, focusing

on assisting neighbouring schools with curriculum matters and presenting at workshops and conferences. But, enacting leadership in these spaces beyond the school was challenging. Overall, my analysis of the participants' stories clearly showed that they possessed leadership qualities of determination, a desire for knowledge acquisition and professional development, and intrinsic motivation to lead. However, it also showed how their leadership was restricted. It was most apparent in classrooms and sometimes transitioned outside into the school and, less commonly, beyond the school.

8.3 Learning about Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in the personal sphere

This section highlights my learning about Muslim female teachers' leadership in the personal sphere.

8.3.1 Patriarchy and religion as contradictory forces

There were experiences of patriarchy and religion as powerful, and in some ways, contradictory forces. These forces affected Muslim female teachers' leadership opportunities and development. I draw on the scholarship of Sümer (2006) and Moorosi (2010, 2011), who both highlight how patriarchy, culture and religion impede female leadership. This study revealed how patriarchal experiences can negatively impact girls' and women's leadership development. Many males within Muslim households restricted girls and women from pursuing education and developing leadership.

In contrast, in Islamic scriptures, the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) encouraged and supported his wives to take on leadership positions. I draw on a relevant verse from the hadith that speaks about seeking knowledge for all Muslims (boys and girls):

“the seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim” (Al Tirmidhi-Hadith 71)

This verse from the hadith communicates a clear message of empowerment for both boys and girls. However, some male members interpreted religious teachings from the Quran and hadith to perpetuate their interest in maintaining control over Muslim women within their families. They thus ignored these theological doctrines, preventing Muslim girls and women from accessing formal education, developing leadership roles and accessing leadership within and beyond the home.

In researching Muslim female teachers' leadership experiences in the personal sphere, I have become very uncomfortable with the contradictory forces of patriarchy and religious teachings. This discomfort directed me to take a questioning stance in this regard. This questioning was not because of arrogance or disrespect but due to a renewed understanding of Holy teachings. This revived understanding enabled me as a researcher to ask uncomfortable questions, such as: Where in the Quran or hadith does it say Muslim girls and women should not be educated, empowered or become leaders? With this rejuvenated thinking, I discovered that patriarchy and religion as contradictory forces needed to be interrogated continuously to enable female leadership development within and beyond the personal sphere.

8.3.2 The expression of the voice of Muslim women

The open communication of Muslim women's voices is key to leadership. I draw on Adichie's (2015, p. 47) scholarship on feminism (as discussed in Chapter Two), which highlights "speaking up for what is right, being able to say no and protesting for [our] rights as a woman". From this, I gathered that Muslim female teachers must articulate our views to access and develop leadership.

Some participants belonged to liberal homes where Muslim parents were not so strict and welcomed new ideas and thinking. Other participants, who came from more conservative, orthodox families, were not encouraged to express their views, let alone be part of decision making or other essential discussions concerning activities within the home. Their voices were silenced as they were forced to follow and obey rules. Some participants self-confidently expressed their opinions within their families, while others were silenced as they were not encouraged by patriarchs and matriarchs to express themselves. This forced silence served to control some Muslim women, as being outspoken was considered as being defiant.

The assertive expression of Muslim female teachers' voices is closely linked to our ability to make decisions. For some participants, communicating our choices and decisions built our self-esteem and confidence, which are crucial leadership attributes. Nevertheless, for some participants articulating our opinions at home was an arduous journey. This journey was difficult because we sometimes had to defy certain decisions and choices made for us by the patriarchs and matriarchs within our homes. The acceptance of Muslim girls' and women's voices at home is pivotal in enhancing decision-making opportunities and developing leadership.

Fear to express ourselves was sometimes a stumbling block to leadership. For some Muslim female participants, this fear slowly transitioned as some broke the barriers and began to express themselves. Each of them realised their need to voice their desire to be educated, contributing to their leadership development. However, the consequences were taxing. They led to the breakdown of some family ties, which further complicated their leadership within the personal sphere, as some Muslim women were regarded as defiant and rude.

8.3.3 Social inclusion in a gendered society

The teachings of Islamic texts in the Quran should positively impact Muslim female teachers' lived leadership experiences. I draw on the verse mentioned in Chapter Two (Surat-al-Hujurat 49:13), where a clear message of equal treatment of women is highlighted. However, some homes, there was a gender divide between Muslim men and women. This discrimination between genders went against the guiding principles of Islamic teachings. I draw on Khalil and DeCuir's (2018) scholarship on Islamic feminist school leadership. From this, I came to understand that the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah accorded Muslim women rights, such as "disposition, gender equality and social justice" (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018, p. 96). These rights were not always fulfilled within some homes.

The participants' leadership experiences were deeply enmeshed in their beliefs of Islamic practices and cultural expectations of what Muslim women should and should not do. Some participants did not wholly rebel but rather incorporated a balance between their understanding and implementation of Islamic principles, together with the support of their family members and later their spouses. Others struggled to access opportunities in developing their leadership potential within a gendered community. Being included in a gendered society needs to begin within our homes and then transition to other areas.

8.3.4 Synthesis of my learnings in the personal sphere

My new understandings aroused awareness of the need to be careful about believing information linked to patriarchy and Islamic teachings given by some patriarchs. Verification of information about culture, traditions and Islamic beliefs must be encouraged, enabling more Muslim families to reduce patriarchal practices within their homes. If this verification is practised, more Muslim females like the participants would be equipped to seek education and aspire to become leaders

within and beyond the personal sphere. Muslim female teachers' voices are crucial in developing leadership to express their views on decision-making, choices, and overcoming restrictions. Lastly, many Muslim female teachers have a desire for social inclusion. This would be beneficial in role modelling leadership potential, developing leadership potential within the home and later transitioning into accessing broader leadership opportunities. If heeded, these learnings would create future Muslim families' opportunities to promote female leadership.

8.4 Learning about Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in the professional sphere

This section makes visible my learnings about Muslim female teachers' leadership in the professional sphere.

8.4.1 Demonstrating a restricted form of teacher leadership

Leadership within the professional sphere is not only about Muslim female teachers' appointment to formal leadership positions in schools, but also about their leadership practices (i.e., leadership as performance) in different zones within the professional sphere. As Grant's (2012) model illustrates, we most freely enacted leadership within the confines of our classrooms. In this relatively private space, we experimented with different teaching and learning methodologies, planned innovative activities, developed and used appropriate resources, engaged in creative assessment strategies, and kept abreast of new developments by participating in professional development. While some of us took on leadership outside the classroom, this was limited. Much of our leadership was demonstrated in Grant's teacher leadership zone one, "*continuing to teach to improve one's own teaching' within the classroom*", and to a lesser extent in zone two, "*providing curriculum development knowledge within one's own school*" and "*leading in-service education and assisting others within one's own school*" (Grant, 2012, p. 56). In my view, we thus practised a restricted form of teacher leadership because much of our performed leadership was limited to these two zones. As Muslim female teachers, our classrooms were a private space that was not often an area where interactions with other adults occurred, or visitors could see our teaching. Owing to this closeted space, our most extraordinary leadership performance was limited to the classroom zone.

As Muslim female teachers, this transpired because the classroom space was, in some ways, insulated from the patriarchal forces that were often an impediment to women's leadership. This

space was an area where Muslim female teachers could territorialise and assume identities, free from the constraining norms that religion (albeit falsely) imposed on them in terms of leadership.

8.4.2 Curriculum leadership: Reimagining the curriculum

Some Muslim female teachers engaged in curriculum leadership by reimagining the curriculum in terms of their context. They revised the official curriculum (curriculum as plan) to suit their independent Muslim school ethos (curriculum as practice). The curriculum re-imagined, and the teaching and learning resources that were deemed sensitive to Islamic ethos schools had to be adapted to suit the context. Muslim female teachers' ability to innovate to serve their context demonstrated curriculum leadership. Furthermore, I draw on Shah's (2006) scholarship on context-responsive leadership to show how our leadership as Muslim female teachers could not be separated from Islam's principles and values, creating the need to recontextualise the curriculum to suit our Islamic ethos.

8.4.3 Marginalisation in accessing leadership

In my view, marginalisation concerning teacher leadership includes precluding teachers from accessing powerful positions within the professional sphere. These positions range from formal leadership positions to informal ones within the professional context. I draw on Ryan et al. (2016), Shapira, Arar and Azaiza (2011), as well as Sumer (2006), whose scholarship highlights the predicaments of women in leadership. From this, I understood that although the participants sometimes triumphed in leadership within a limited domain in the professional sphere, they had to overcome many hurdles in their path to achieve leadership. I discovered that some Muslim female participants were ignored because of their youth; their dress and disposition were seen as a threat by some male and female teachers, HoDs and principals, as they feared the emergence of new ideas and trends within the professional context. Additionally, Muslim female teachers were sometimes disregarded when they expressed their views freely. Some senior teachers, HoDs, deputy principals, and principals saw this candidness or straightforwardness as too dangerous. Furthermore, in Islamic ethos schools, most leadership positions of HoD, deputy principal and principal were earmarked for male professionals. Being ignored impacted some Muslim female teachers' identities. They saw themselves as powerless because they could not access and take advantage of formal leadership positions within their professional sphere.

8.4.4 Synthesis of my learnings in the professional sphere

My new understandings about Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in the professional sphere revealed that Muslim women, like the participants, can develop and perform leadership. Recontextualisation of the curriculum was proof that Muslim female teachers could enact leadership, as reimagined the curriculum to suit their teaching and learning contexts. Some of their abilities to reimagine the curriculum focused on their intentions and benefits of facilitating the best pedagogy within different professional contexts. However, the Muslim female teachers engaged in a restricted form of leadership, which further demonstrated the challenges they had to overcome. Finally, marginalisation in accessing formal leadership positions revealed how Muslim female teachers experienced difficulties in this regard because of their gender, religion, culture, and dispositions. If they were valued for their expertise in enacting leadership, more Muslim female teachers would be forerunners in leading within the professional sphere.

8.5 Learning about the possibilities for Muslim female teachers enacting leadership

This section expresses my learning about the prospects for Muslim female teacher leadership in the personal sphere. I describe reimagining leadership, changing perceptions of community members towards women's leadership, challenging the norm of early marriage, and understanding Muslim women's psychosomatic needs.

8.5.1 Possibilities for Muslim female teachers within the personal sphere

8.5.1.1 Reimagining leadership

The promotion of possibilities for Muslim female teachers within the personal sphere requires Muslim families to reimagine leadership. Families should realise that leadership development and accessing leadership do not mean going against the Quran and Sunnah teachings. A Moulana (priest) or Hafiziha (female who has memorised the Quran) should help Muslim families to learn the teachings of the Quran and hadith with a renewed understanding of women's leadership. This renewed understanding should begin when both boys and girls attend compulsory madrasa in their early childhood. A change in the mindset of Moulanas is needed, as they were previously accustomed to promoting male leadership rather than female leadership. Furthermore, Muslim

community heads or theologians should educate Muslim men about listening to girls' and women's voices and accepting female leadership within the personal sphere.

8.5.1.2 Changing perceptions of community members towards women's leadership

The mentality of many of our Muslim community members needs to change. Community members need to move away from traditional conservative expectations of Muslim women. A more informed religious stance, guided by the teachings of Holy Scriptures, should be encouraged. This awareness of religious instruction should encourage a changing perception of Muslim women as future generations' leaders. The scholarship of Archard (2013) illustrates the influence of communities on women's leadership in general. From this, I understood the importance of communities being actively involved in creating opportunities to enhance women's leadership. This could be made possible by community members taking small strides towards leadership development, which would positively affect the surrounding community. This may be challenging because Muslim families face tensions from exposure to community members and might be afraid to encourage Muslim girls and women towards leadership. Implementing a support group created by family members could help change some community members' mindsets to become more accepting of Muslim women in leadership.

8.5.1.3 Challenging the norm of early marriage

Patriarchs and matriarchs in many Muslim homes should move away from the idea of early marriage for their daughters. The scholarship of Ijaz and Abbas (2010) on British Muslim women illustrates how, for some South-Asian Muslim parents, early marriage seemed to be the best choice for their daughters. Family members should instead concentrate on encouraging young Muslim girls and women to develop leadership within their homes. This is supported by the scholarship of Shapira et al. (2011). They emphasise the need for support from family and community members to enhance innovative thinking to encourage, develop, and access leadership.

I draw on Khalil and DeCuir's (2018) writings to illustrate how important it is for Muslim women to encourage young Muslim girls to attend school. However, in some contexts, the choice of schools that Muslim girls attend is crucial to developing leadership. This is because the schools' ethos plays an integral role in leadership development, as some Muslim ethos schools continually enforce early marriage as the best option for Muslim girls.

From this study, as well as my engagement with the literature, I saw how early marriage impedes many Muslim women's leadership aspirations, as many of their spouses and other patriarchs in their matrimonial home do not support Muslim women's leadership. When Muslim girls marry early, they take on the household's leadership by engaging in cooking, having children and taking care of children, and other domestic chores. This means that these women have less time and energy for developing themselves in different ways. With all these domestic responsibilities, many Muslim women become firmly entrenched in the domestic world and cannot get out of it to build themselves in new directions.

Orthodox and conservative Muslim families should be encouraged to seek counsellors and other therapists who could assist some Muslim women in coping with deliberate domestication, early marriage, and the hindrance of leadership opportunities by family members and spouses. This therapy could allow Muslim women to overcome hurdles experienced through patriarchal parenting styles and attain leadership development within and beyond the personal sphere.

8.5.1.4 Understanding the psychosomatic needs of Muslim women

Understanding the psychosomatic needs of Muslim women is integral to developing and accessing leadership. Personal motivation should be encouraged, as many Muslim women feel that they cannot lead, impacting their self-worth. As Muslim women, we need to remind each other that we are not inferior because of our age, gender or religion. Muslim women should have an intrinsic motivation toward developing leadership within and outside their homes. This innate motivation should come from their need for inner satisfaction in achieving personal goals and their desire to enact leadership.

Muslim families should create opportunities for daughters and sons to develop and see themselves as future leaders. They should teach their sons to be more tolerant and accept Muslim women's and girls' leadership capabilities. These young Muslim boys and men should move away from the patriarchal treatment of daughters, mothers and wives. Family gatherings must be geared towards encouraging a change in mindset in acknowledging Muslim women's leadership potential. Consultative and therapeutic relationships within many homes could give female Muslim leadership a platform to be understood.

Experiences of role modelling by family members is key to developing and accessing leadership opportunities for many Muslim girls and women. I draw on the writings of Shapira et al. (2011), Arar and Abu-Rabia-Queder (2011) and Archard (2013), whose studies on women's leadership highlight the need for girls and women to be exposed to female role models. This role modelling should begin with female family members displaying their own leadership disposition within their homes. Muslim women might feel more comfortable exhibiting role modelling within the home than outside of it, as the household is a private space. Within the community, Muslim families are exposed to lots of tensions concerning enhancing women's leadership. As Muslim communities, we should encourage young Muslim girls to emulate the leadership seen within their homes, contributing to their leadership development within and outside the home.

8.6 Possibilities for Muslim female teachers within the professional sphere

To put forward prospects for Muslim female teachers within the professional sphere, I focus on the mentorship of Muslim female teachers in leadership, supporting Muslim female teachers' success, and creating leadership opportunities beyond the school environment.

8.6.1 Mentorship of Muslim female teachers in leadership

I draw on Grant's (2012) scholarship on teacher leadership to illustrate the need for mentorship. Grant (2012) points out that for teacher leadership to grow, senior teachers must develop novice teachers. This development of novice teachers must prepare teachers with a "corollary set of knowledge, skills and disposition" (Cuenca, 2020, p. 6) to become masters in their craft. From this, I understand that teachers' existing knowledge about teaching and learning needs to be transformed into leadership in different professional spheres.

As experienced Muslim female teachers, we need to be proactive in developing novice teachers' leadership potential. This development should cater to the need for capacity development of existing knowledge, collaboration with other colleagues, expertise in curriculum delivery, professional development, and the ability to engage in all matters within the professional context. Novice teachers must be encouraged to ask questions about teaching and learning, for the asking will stimulate telling, which would develop leadership. This development would promote novice teachers and transition into more Muslim female teachers accessing leadership at different professional levels. This accessing of informal leadership at various levels would help lessen the

burden of formally appointed leaders and create support for the formally appointed teacher leaders. Mentorship towards developing and accessing leadership would be distributed and contribute to bringing about change in teaching and learning.

8.6.2 Supporting the success of Muslim female teachers

To celebrate Muslim female teachers' success, we need the support of both male and female colleagues. Male colleagues must become strong cheerleaders of Muslim female teachers' leadership, which may help bring about gender parity and embrace diversity. Complimenting, affirming and validating Muslim women's successes would support female leadership and build our Muslim community. Both male and female teachers should be encouraged to collaborate, identify, acknowledge and welcome each other's leadership potential and the need to lead. The mode of dress, voice, religious and traditional values of Muslim female teachers should not be barriers to their leadership development and opportunities. Men and women in power within school communities should understand that Muslim female teachers possess the competencies and attributes to be successful leaders. Therefore, they should be encouraged to work collaboratively with management, other teachers and school governing body members, showcasing their leadership potential.

8.6.3 Creating leadership opportunities beyond the school environment

The school communities (people who have a vested interest in the school, such as the parent community, governing bodies and NGOs) should create opportunities to expose Muslim female teachers to leadership opportunities beyond the school's confines. In this study, a lack of Muslim female teacher leadership within the broader community was revealed. Furthermore, Grant's (2012) model of teacher leadership points out the need to engage in more wide-ranging leadership. Many Muslim female teachers, like the participants, were strong women who overcame hurdles to enact some aspects of leadership; however, Muslim women still face challenges that prevent them from developing and accessing leadership. Therefore, more Muslim female teachers must be encouraged to persevere in the face of the obstacles thrown up by the school contexts, senior management, their initial teaching and learning experiences, as well as personally imposed inhibitions.

Moreover, participants sometimes displayed leadership in chairing and presenting at workshops and conferences. Professional colleagues should encourage more Muslim female teachers to chair and present curriculum content at regional and national forums. The professional community (staff within the school context) should also build opportunities for Muslim female teachers to collaborate and develop relationships with teachers from other schools and regions. Occasions for networking with other schools and communities should be encouraged to develop their leadership. By accessing leadership opportunities beyond the school environment, Muslim female teachers could enact a more expansive leadership form.

8.7 Contributions of the study

This study was a small-scale, in-depth, collaborative self-study. This self-study is unique to my context, and the findings cannot be generalised to all Muslim female teachers. However, the study offers insights into Muslim female teachers' successes and challenges in enacting leadership. This study could prove to be a useful resource for teachers, school governing bodies, senior school management members, together with family and community members who show an interest in supporting Muslim female teachers' leadership and the leadership of other marginalised groups. In what follows, I set out the methodological, contextual and theoretical contributions of the study.

8.7.1 Methodological contributions

This study emerged from the need to look at my leadership experience as a Muslim female teacher and collaborate with other Muslim female teacher participants. This study was sensitive as it dealt with a vulnerable group, Muslim female teachers. It was sometimes difficult to generate data because they were afraid to divulge experiences for fear of their personal lives being made public.

Creating a caring and trusting atmosphere contributed to data generation, as the participants needed to feel safe and secure and that sharing their personal experiences would be confidential. Telling my own story first during collaborative discussions with the participants broke the ice and created an environment of safety and protection (Cuenca, 2020). This collaborative self-study entailed revealing painful experiences that some Muslim female teachers were afraid to express and divulge. Therefore, I needed to ensure that the participants were relaxed and calm and not force them to reveal hurtful experiences. As an insider researcher, my insight and patience facilitated the data generation, as I provided "emotional support" (Mitchell & Irvine, 2008, p. 34) by listening

to the participants' painful lived experiences without interrupting them. I took care not to probe intrusively into their recollections but instead waited for them to reveal them and reaffirmed their revelations with empathetic words. I also ensured that I would not embarrass the participants throughout our collaborative discussions by not asking invasive questions that might make them uneasy in front of others (Samaras, 2011).

I was able to develop bonds with the participants in ways that an outsider researcher may not have been able to. During our collaborative discussions, I paid heed to not being too intrusive, inconsistent, disrespectful or overpowering (Cuenca, 2020). There was also the tension of not making the participants feel that I had power over them or felt superior to them. I had to show them that I was part of the group of participants and that precedence was not accorded based on being a researcher, qualifications, or designation. The trusting relationship that developed also gave the participants a feeling of belonging and the ability to feel some ownership of the research journey (Masinga, 2013). As an insider researcher, this bond eventually enabled me to ask some questions that might have felt too intrusive if coming from an outsider.

As an insider researcher, many of the participants' distressing experiences triggered memories of my own painful experiences. Sometimes these memories plagued me with emotions that were hard to deal with. Sharing some of my feelings in a way that I felt comfortable with contributed to the data generation process as it created a sense of belonging in this group.

Engaging in self-study entails studying oneself, and this meant revealing private and personal experiences; therefore, ensuring non-exposure to the public eye was a priority (Cuenca, 2020). To this end, I used the visual arts as a tool whereby the participants could express their lived experiences through the medium of self-created images, without including any identifying features. One such visual arts device was memory drawing. Memory drawing is not new to self-study research; however, it was new to the Muslim female teacher participants. Islam does not promote the 'arts' as it involves depicting human beings and eyes, which is deemed inappropriate. However, Islam supports art in the form of calligraphy (Arabic art). The participants' drawings hid their identities but were emotive and revealed personal experiences (Cuenca, 2020). Furthermore, the pictures were authentic and allowed the participants to represent personally meaningful past and present experiences of relationships, religion, culture and leadership. Moreover, through discussion of the images, participants conveyed how they dealt with sensitive

issues and what they meant to their personal and professional development and access to leadership.

Letter writing as a creative writing practice further contributed to the data generation. It provided a private platform of expression of the experiences of Muslim female teachers. Letter writing is also not new to self-study, but this kind of self-reflective letter writing was a unique experience for the participants. As Muslim women or girls, we were not encouraged to write letters to express our feelings or shared our personal experiences. Writing a letter to their future selves allowed the participants to articulate hitherto unexpressed leadership possibilities safely.

Overall, this study adds to essential methodological conversations about ethics in self-study research (Cuenca, 2020), particularly concerning collaborative self-study research on sensitive topics and with vulnerable participants. The study offers an exemplar of how novice collaborative self-study researchers can take heed of the ethical significance of developing bonds, working with emotions, and using creative data generation practices.

8.7.2 Contextual contributions

This collaborative self-study journey required me to interact with the literature on Muslim female teachers' leadership. I searched databases that included ERIC (Educational Research Information Centre), EBSCOhost and our university library catalogue. Internationally, I found a dearth of research on Muslim female teachers' leadership. Among the few studies I saw, the following are noteworthy: Khalil and DeCuir (2018), Syed (2000), Ahmad (2001) and Brooks (2018). These authors focus on Muslim women's leadership in various educational contexts and illustrate their struggles and triumphs. However, I have not yet come across scholarly literature on Muslim female teachers' leadership in the South African context. Therefore, this study adds to the research literature, internationally and locally, on a particular group of vulnerable and marginalised females in teacher leadership, i.e., Muslim female teachers. To my knowledge, this is the first study in South Africa on Muslim female teachers' leadership.

8.7.3 Theoretical contributions

I found Grant's (2012) model of teacher leadership a useful starting point for understanding teacher leadership in schools. This study contributes by extending Grant's (2012) model in the classroom zone. In this zone, the indicators flag particular teacher leadership practices. One of the indicators

involves “engaging in reflective practice and action research” (Grant, 2012, p. 56). From my study, I surmised that understanding teacher leadership in the classroom zone necessitates reflexive practice. Reflexive practice is more profound than reflective practice, because reflexivity requires a self-critical inquiry into personal and professional identities and contexts and how these influence professional practice (Samaras, 2011; Samaras et al., 2004).

Grant’s (2012) model suggests that classroom practice be developed through action research. My study points to self-study research being a more insightful methodology to improve classroom practice. As Feldman, Paugh, and Mills (2004, p. 974) identify, one of the key distinguishing features of self-study research is “to be self-critical of one’s role as both practitioner and researcher”. While conducting the study, I found myself being pulled between being a teacher, a Muslim woman, and a Muslim female teacher leader (Feldman et al., 2004). I saw how the Muslim female teachers’ leadership practices were influenced by their religious beliefs and the values and teachings of Islam, which guided their classroom practice and pedagogy. In many ways, their personal identities enhanced their professional practice by inspiring what they taught, how they taught, and their teaching and learning resources.

I also had to engage in deep thinking to identify problems and challenges associated with Muslim female teachers’ leadership within the personal and professional spheres. This was often extremely difficult, as I was concerned about being seen as being critical of my family members, religious community and colleagues. However, as a reflexive researcher, I came to understand that my task was not to be critical of individual people but instead to be critical of some of the social and cultural patterns that I saw. These patterns include viewpoints, behaviours and habits that limit Muslim female teachers’ leadership.

8.8 Conclusion

This study was guided by two key research questions: *What are our experiences as Muslim female teachers of enacting leadership? What are the possibilities for enhancing Muslim female teachers’ experiences of enacting leadership?* I ascertained that Muslim female teachers are competent in leading within personal and professional spheres. However, they often experienced barriers related to patriarchy, religion, and culture. Furthermore, I learnt that Muslim female teachers’ voices were pivotal in their leadership development as they needed to communicate their views in decision-

making, choices, and overcoming restrictions. Male and female family members, community members, and colleagues must compliment, affirm and validate Muslim women's successes so that the development of our community might be enhanced by female Muslim leadership. Religious and traditional Muslim values should not be a barrier to women's leadership development and accessing leadership opportunities. Men and women in power within school communities should understand that Muslim female teachers can be successful leaders. Openings and support should be generated to expose Muslim female teachers to wide-ranging leadership opportunities within and beyond the school.

Overall, this study offers essential methodological insights into self-study research ethics, particularly concerning collaborative self-study research on sensitive topics and vulnerable participants. This thesis exemplifies how self-study researchers can take heed of the ethical significance of developing bonds, working with emotions, and using creative data generation practices.

This study adds to the research literature, globally and locally, on a particular group of at-risk and marginalised females in teacher leadership, i.e., Muslim female teachers. To my knowledge, this is the first study in South Africa on Muslim female teachers' leadership.

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APPENDIX A



09 January 2015

Mrs Rashida Khan (210551456)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Khan,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0017/015D

Project title: Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in primary schools: A collective self-study

Full Approval – Expedited Approval

With regards to your application for ethical clearance received on 05 January 2015. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Dr Inba Naicker
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms Bongl Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville



5 October 2018

Mrs Rashida Khan 210551456
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Khan

Protocol reference number: HSS/0017/015D
Project Title: Muslim Female Teachers Enacting Leadership: A Collaborative Self-Study

Approval notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application for an amendment dated 7 September 2018 has now been granted **Full Approval** as follows:

- **Change in Title**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully


.....
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor K Pithouse-Korgan & Dr i Naicker
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Sheryl Jeenarain

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APPENDIX C

20 Biggarsberg Street

Shallcross

4093

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Rashida Khan and I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, South Africa. I am conducting a self-study titled: **Muslim female teachers enacting leadership: A Collaborative Self-Study.**

The research objectives are:

- To examine our experiences of enacting leadership as Muslim female teachers.
- To develop a deeper understanding of why we have these experiences of enacting leadership as Muslim female teachers.
- To explore how we can support Muslim female teachers enacting leadership in South African Schools enhance our experiences of enacting leadership as Muslim female teachers and create opportunities to support Muslim female teachers' leadership positions.

I have chosen you as a participant because of your interest towards Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. To gather information for my study, I will be conducting this collective self-study research with you and three other Muslim female teachers who teach in schools in the broader Durban region. All participants have expressed their interest in my research and have offered to contribute valuable, rich information about their individual experiences. The participants vary in age and post levels, ranging from level 1 to principals. All experiences of my research

participants will inform my understanding of Muslim female teachers enacting leadership. This variety will provide rich data that will add more meaning to my research topic. Data will be generated through journal writing, memory drawing, group discussions, short story writing, letter writing and journal entries.

This project will take place over a year or two (meeting once a month) and all sessions will take place at a convenient time and venue that suit all participants. I have also realised that some of the issues that emerge through our personal history remain unresolved and are still emotionally and professionally challenging for us. If need be, I will be seeking the help of a social worker, psychologist and counsellor who will help us to deal with past experiences.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person.
- Your name will not be revealed in the PhD thesis or any research publications or presentations.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

This study cannot be generalised to all Muslim women or all schools in South Africa. I will share the findings of the thesis with you by asking you to verify data for authenticity. I will ensure that you have an opportunity to read and discuss the results of the thesis before I finalise it so that you are comfortable with the final dissertation being published.

I can be contacted at Email: rkrashida@gmail.com Tel: 0845678651

My supervisor is Prof Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za; Tel 031 2603460

My co-supervisor is Dr Inbanathan Naicker, who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: Naickeri1@ukzn.ac.za; Tel: 031 2603461

The contact person in the Research Office is Ms Mariette Snyman, who is located on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za ; Tel: 031 260 8350.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Rashida Khan

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project: **Muslim female teachers enacting leadership: A Collaborative Self-Study**

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

- Use the audio-recordings of my group discussions YES/NO
- Use my journal entries of past experiences YES/NO
- Use my drawings of past experiences YES/NO
- Use my short stories of past experiences YES/NO
- Use my letters written during the project YES/NO

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

L. Gething, M.Phil. (cum laude)

WHIZZ@WORDS

PO Box 1155, Milnerton 7441, South Africa; cell 072 212 5417

16 September 2020

Declaration of editing of Dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education, University of Kwazulu-Natal: Muslim female teachers enacting leadership: a collaborative self-study

I hereby declare that I carried out language editing of the above thesis on behalf of the author, Rashida BeBe Khan.

I am a professional writer and editor with many years of experience (e.g. 5 years on *SA Medical Journal*, 10 years heading the corporate communication division at the SA Medical Research Council), who specialises in Science and Technology editing - but am adept at editing in many different subject areas. I have edited a great deal of work for various academic journals and universities, including many theses.

I am a full member of the South African Freelancers' Association as well as of the Professional Editors' Association.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular area of the document is redacted with a solid black box, obscuring the signature and any text underneath.

LEVERNE GETHING

leverne@eject.co.za

SAGIE NAICKER, SIBONELO BLOSE, FREEDOM CHIORORO,
RASHIDA KHAN AND INBANATHAN NAICKER

7. FROM A CRUTCH TO A BUS

*Learning about Educational Leadership Research and Practice through
Referencing and Mapping of Objects*

The objects which surround us do not simply have utilitarian aspects... they serve as a kind of mirror which reflects our own image.


(Dichter; as cited in Berger, 2016, p. 14)

PUTTING THE CHAPTER INTO CONTEXT

In reflecting on the scholarship in educational leadership research, it appears that what counts as data in educational leadership research has generally been viewed very narrowly. The discipline has relied heavily on more traditional methods to produce data. For instance, interviews, observations, survey questionnaires, and document analysis have dominated the way scholars generate data in educational leadership research (Deacon, Osman, & Buchler, 2009; Muijs, 2011). Adding voice to the limited methodological tools deployed in the researching of educational leadership, Michael Samuel's evocative call in his keynote address to the 13th international conference of the Educational Management Association of South Africa (EMASA), regarding possible alternative methodological approaches and methods to "expand a potentially moribund discipline of education management and leadership," warrants thoughtful attention (Samuel, 2012). In response, this chapter focuses on an alternative methodological practice in researching educational leadership, namely object inquiry. The chapter weaves an account of educational leadership data production and interpretation invoked by objects (Hurdley, 2006). It relates how working with objects can help us define and redefine who we are as leaders. It recounts how objects can prompt us to reexamine our leadership learning, experiences, and practices (Nordstrom, 2013). More importantly, it signals possibilities for learning about educational leadership research and practice through object inquiry. Thus, the key question that underpins this chapter is: How and what can we learn about educational leadership research and practice through object inquiry?

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