



Leadership Styles, Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits of Muslim Women Academic Heads of the Mindanao State University and their Correlation with Organizational Performance

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ABSTRACT

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The study identified the leadership style, emotional intelligence and personality traits of the Muslim women deans of the Mindanao State University, the biggest state University in Southern Mindanao, and their correlation with organizational performance. The respondents of the study were the faculty members of the four colleges of the University under the leadership of a Muslim woman dean. The study disclosed that the women deans practiced more of transformational than the transactional leadership style. Transformational leadership was the preferred and widely practiced style among these deans, according to nearly all the faculty respondents. In terms of organizational performance, the faculty respondents rated their Muslim women deans as highly effective. Using McKinsey's 7S model, the deans were rated highest in skills, followed by shared values, style, strategy, system, and staff, in descending order. This indicates that the deans excel in various aspects of organizational management. The study also established correlations between these elements based on the data obtained through the use of four standardized questionnaires such as the Bass multi-factor leadership instrument and Mckinsey's 7S model. Moreover, the study revealed that there is a moderate positive correlation between leadership style and organizational performance, another moderate positive correlation between personality traits and organizational performance, but a low positive correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational performance. This suggests that leadership style and personality traits play a more significant role in influencing organizational performance than emotional intelligence. In conclusion, it can be hypothetically argued that the Muslim women deans under study were more inclined to embrace transformational leadership, emphasizing emotional intelligence and displaying favourable personality traits.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The status of Muslim women in the world today has changed dramatically in the last few decades. As a consequence of their increasing desire to play significant role in all aspects of life, they are now engaged in an ultimate quest to attain the highest leadership echelon in all segments

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more specifically, in higher education. However, in the case of Muslim women, it has been observed that in Muslim countries, women's quest for equal opportunity in assuming leadership positions especially in the academic, posed a major challenge to the Government and society in general, that still recognize male dominance. In fact, various research studies [12,9] also revealed that the major stumbling blocks for the slow movement of women in the academic ladder are gender-bias and other social and personal factors. Moreover, in their most recent research study on women leadership in academic institutions, Kellerman and Rhodes [12], found gender-bias and female stereotyping, low confidence, household works and personal incapacity as obstacles to women's increased representation in higher academic positions.

Furthermore, aside from female stereotyping and other related factors, it is worthwhile mentioning that up to now, Muslim women's participation in both local and national governance, in particular, is still very limited, if not restricted due to the strong influence of Islam and traditional culture that prescribe women to stay at home. This led many to believe that Muslim women should play passive roles in society as mandated by Islam which then amounts to discrimination. This can also be attributed to a large extent on the prevalent misconceived notion about the doctrinal position of Islam regarding the status of Muslim women which place them in an inferior status relative to Muslim men. Moreover, this is also reinforced by the common notion that Muslim women in general lack the competency as leaders especially in academic institutions [21].

Apparently, in many Muslim countries as well as countries where Muslims are minorities like the Philippines, research studies in academic institutions concerning the leadership styles [13], emotional intelligence and personality traits of Muslim women academic leaders are still very much found wanting. Therefore, this paper provides an overview of research examining the status of leadership practices, emotional intelligence and personality traits of Muslim women academic leaders. In this connection, this study attempted to know the influence of Muslim women leadership style, among other factors, in an academic institution on organizational performance. More specifically, it is designed to ascertain the faculty perception on the leadership style, emotional intelligence and personality traits of Muslim women deans of the selected colleges of the University under consideration, and their correlation with organizational performance.

In short, the uniqueness of this study as distinguished from other studies on Muslim women leadership in academic institutions, is that it investigated how different or how similar are the leadership, personality and emotional traits of Muslim women deans from their male and female counterparts with special consideration on the influence of Islamic and Western values. More importantly, the study was chosen in order to address the following issues and challenges facing women leaders especially Muslim women, namely: the need to investigate the leadership style, emotional intelligence and personality traits as possible factors contributing to under representation and slow movement of women in the leadership ladder; the need to prove or reject the notion or misconception that Muslim women lack the knowledge, competence, emotional and personal skills to assume leadership positions; and the need to examine the Western and Islamic impact on Muslim women leadership in higher education. The aforesaid three factors were then correlated with organizational or college performance, hence, some hypotheses were tested in the study.

1.2 Literature Review

The literature on leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and personality traits among women academic heads reveals a complex interplay of factors influencing college performance. Various studies emphasized the significance of leadership styles in influencing organizational culture and

outcomes, with transformational leadership emerging as a common and effective approach among women academic leaders. Emotional intelligence, characterized by self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and adaptability, is identified as a crucial element contributing to effective leadership. Moreover, the impact of personality traits, such as resilience and openness, is explored, providing valuable insights into how these characteristics impact decision-making and organizational dynamics within academic institutions led by women. Overall, related literature and studies demonstrate the interconnected nature of these variables and their total effect on the effective and efficient performance of colleges under the leadership of women academic heads.

In theory and practice, leadership is popularly viewed as a difficult concept to understand. Historically, in the absence of a globally accepted leadership style due to different perceptions about the concept, scholars and researchers have recommended different and contradictory leadership styles [18]. Nonetheless, numerous studies [11,19] have disclosed the critical role of leadership style for organizational success and performance with the accompanying justification that the leader provides the right direction and motivation that guide the organization and employees in achieving the organizational goals. Thahier *et al.*, [23] also claimed that leadership style has a consistent significant impact on leader-employee relationships which suggest that poor relationship will lead to poor employee or organizational performance. In short, leadership style is the crucial factor that either enhances or decreases employee's motivation to be productive or not.

Aside from leadership style, emotional intelligence is another equally important factor that influences organizational performance. Emotional intelligence is a complex term with no precise definition. Parker [20] defined it as the capacity of an individual to stimulate himself to face failure or adverse conditions without expressing negative mode that will adversely affect his performance as an employee or member of an organization. It is also perceived as a positive skill of enabling a person to be sensitive to other people's condition for a better harmonious coordination [6].

It is generally accepted that emotionally intelligent leaders produce workers who are happier and more dedicated to the organization. In this connection, Mathew and Gupta [14] introduced a new conceptual scheme regarding the association between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. They believed that as managers show strong commitment in attaining organizational goals and better decisions, this can be easily done with high emotional intelligence. At any rate, the significant role of emotional intelligence within and outside the organization was well elaborated by Goodwin and Hein [10]. For academic leaders in particular, the authors recommended the display of the proper emotional traits such as being consistently sympathetic and emphatic instead of showing anxiety and insecurity in relation to teachers and parents.

Moreover, in regard to the impact of personality traits of leaders on organizational performance, it has been found by Daft [7] that differences in personality, leadership style, attitudes and others can immensely affect leadership effectiveness. Due to employees' differences in terms of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, they demonstrate different personality traits that result to complexity of the manager-employee relationships. Thus, there are strong and weak managers as disclosed by Alkahtani *et al.*, [3]. Various factors of personality become together to make up the pieces of who we are as a person and how we interact with the world [22].

Finally, in the case of Muslim women leadership especially in higher education, it was claimed by a related study Almaki *et al.*, [2] that leadership practices of Muslim women leaders do not significantly differ in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The same study mentioned certain leadership behavioral practices that need to be addressed such as team building, networking, decision-making, having career experiences and ideal leadership traits.

On the other hand, a different style of leadership known as scholar activist was observed by Ahmed [1] among Muslim American women leaders. In this innovative study of Ahmed's on

American women's leadership, she discovered certain processes that laid the foundation of Muslim American women leadership. In addition, in a related study of DeCuir [8] conducted in American Islamic schools, it was revealed that religion or gender has no significant influence on leadership, and that Muslim women assume leadership roles due to their experiences.

For Muslim countries, Muslim women leadership roles in general, are varied, such as the case of women judges in the Sharia Court. For instance, in the study of Mueenza [17], it was disclosed that appointment of female judges has become a contentious issue in all of the Muslim nations, especially in Malaysia. Today, countries like Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia have altered their procedure in this respect by choosing Muslim women judges to preside in the courts. However, there is no end to the deliberation and debate among religious groups about this controversial issue. This means that in the absence of a clear verse in the Holy Qur'an or in the Sunnah (prophetic tradition) that neither prohibits nor allows Muslim women as judges, the aforesaid issue is widely open for various interpretations [17]. In Indonesia, for instance, as early as the 1990s, there were already 100 women judges in the Sharia Court. Apparently, circumstances have changed in modern times in Muslim countries; thus, more Muslim nations have become receptive to accepting women in leadership positions especially in the Sharia Court [4].

2. Methodology

In examining and investigating the complex relationship between leadership styles, emotional intelligence, personality traits, and college performance within the context of Muslim women academic heads, the study utilized a multi-faceted methodology. Toward this end, the study employed the McKinsey's 7S model [15,16], in conducting a meticulous and comprehensive examination of the interrelationships of strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style, and staff within academic institutions such as the Mindanao State University (MSU), the biggest state University in the Mindanao Region, Philippines. Similarly, in order to ascertain the leadership styles applied by women academic heads, the Bass Multi-Factor Leadership Instrument [5], was likewise adopted, hence, ensuring a better understanding of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership behaviors. Furthermore, standardized instruments were scientifically chosen to measure emotional intelligence and personality traits, ensuring methodological validity and reliability. Instruments such as the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal and the Big Five Personality Inventory were applied to capture the varied interplay between self-awareness, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and core personality dimensions. The meticulous integration of these diverse instruments not only enhanced the depth of the study's findings but also fortified the scientific veracity of the data, providing an unquestionable foundation for inferring meaningful conclusions regarding the influence of women academic heads on college performance.

The main respondents of the study were the faculty members of the four purposively selected colleges of the University under the deanship or leadership of Muslim women deans. Four standardized questionnaires were utilized in obtaining the data from the faculty respondents who voluntarily participated in this research work based on the University established ethical standards in conducting research.

In terms of the data analytical methods, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation as well as common non-parametric tests more specifically, the Spearman Coefficient Correlation, among others, were used in the study. More specifically, the relationship between nominal variables, namely: leadership style, emotional intelligence and personality traits as independent variables and organizational performance as dependent variable were tested. In

particular, Spearman correlation coefficient was utilized to find the individual effect of the three independent variables on organizational performance as dependent variable.

3. Findings, Implications and Recommendations

In response to the research questions raised in the study, several important findings and their corresponding implications were disclosed. Firstly, In terms of the leadership style practiced by the Muslim women deans, Figure 1 shows that of the 32 indicators of leadership style, 29 were perceived as practiced fairly often by the deans while the other three statements were rated by the respondents as *sometimes* practiced. By leadership category, all the indicators of transformational and transactional leadership were perceived by the respondents as practiced *fairly often* by the Muslim women deans except three transactional statements which were *sometimes* practiced by the deans. The important implication of the findings is that the faculty seems to be comfortable with their Muslim women deans because the latter know the desirable leadership suitable to different situations.

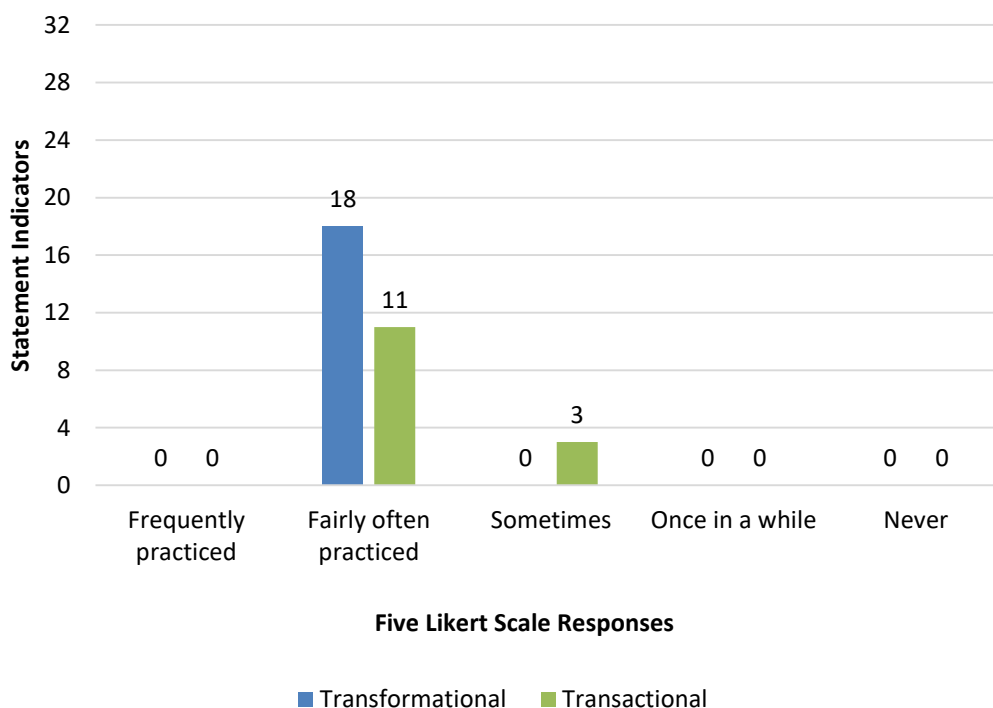


Fig. 1. Leadership statement indicators by frequency of practice

For the degree of emotional intelligence possessed by the Muslim women deans, it is shown in Figure 2, that all the 25 statement indicators of emotional intelligence were perceived by the respondents as high or *highly* observed or practiced by their Muslim women deans. The significant implication of the preceding finding is that Muslim women deans also recognize the importance of emotional intelligence in the management of their colleges.

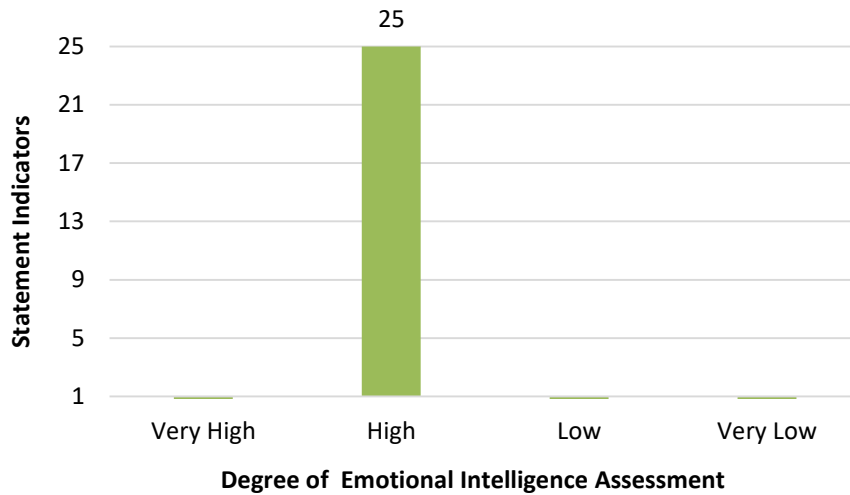


Fig. 2. Emotional intelligence statement indicators

As to the faculty respondents’ perception on the personality traits of their Muslim women deans, Figure 3 discloses the distribution of the 25 indicators of personality traits in relation to the degree of respondents’ assessment on the dean’s personality traits. It is clearly shown that 21 of the total 25 statements were perceived by majority of the respondents as highly observed by their Muslim women deans. On the other hand, three statements were perceived by the respondents as *lowly* observed by their Muslim women deans, and another statement was perceived as *very highly* observed. This same statement suggests that the Muslim women deans were distinctively described as highly knowledgeable of their organizations and their environment.



Fig. 3. Personality traits’ statement indicators

Finally, with respect to the results of the testing of some hypotheses regarding the correlation between leadership style, emotional intelligence and personality traits, on one hand, and organizational performance, Table 1 shows the comparative correlation between the aforementioned three major independent variables and organizational performance. The data reveal that personality traits have the highest Spearman’s rho score of $r_p=0.543$, while emotional intelligence has the lowest with $r_p=0.427$. Both personality traits and leadership style have

moderate correlations with organizational performance because their respective Spearman’s rho values are within the range of 0.051 to 0.70 interpreted as moderate *positive correlation*. On the other hand, emotional intelligence falls within the range of *low positive correlation* category (0.1 to 0.50). This implies that personality traits have a slightly stronger association with organizational performance than leadership style and emotional intelligence.

Table 1

Correlation summary between the dependent and independent variables

Correlation		Spearman’s rho	p-value	Remarks
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
Leadership style	Organizational performance	$r_{\rho}=0.524$	< 0.05	Significant
Emotional intelligence		$r_{\rho}=0.427$	< 0.05	Significant
Personality traits		$r_{\rho}=0.543$	< 0.05	Significant

Legend: $r_{\rho} = 0.0$ (no correlation), $r_{\rho} = .01-.30$ (very low correlation), $.31-.50$ (low +correlation), $.51-.70$ (moderate +correlation), $.71-.90$ (high + correlation), $.91-.99$ (very high + correlation & 1.0 (perfect correlation).

In response to the major study findings and their important implications the following recommendations are advanced:

- i. that the University invest in leadership capacity development programs that are designed to prepare and develop future and existing academic leaders more specifically, deans and department chairperson;
- ii. that the selection of future academic leaders especially deans, should not be done on the basis of their academic ability and rank only, but also on their leadership, emotional and personality traits and skills;
- iii. that in response to the results which disclosed that emotional intelligence has a low positive correlation with college performance, it is of great importance for deans and other academic leaders to analyse their own emotional intelligence because effective leadership is positively influenced by not only developing them but maintaining them too;
- iv. that the University management should widen or enhance the opportunities for qualified Muslim women to occupy higher academic positions in the University; besides, the University as a social laboratory for national integration should provide enough opportunities for Muslim women’s increased leadership participation considering the seemingly new emerging pattern of leadership borne out by the study results;
- v. that our society more specifically, the Muslim communities, make a paradigm shift in their attitudes towards Muslim women’s capability to lead and give them the opportunity to prove themselves competent and capable to contribute in the development of their organization especially in higher education; and
- vi. that future research studies should be conducted to achieve the following objectives: to empirically confirm or reject the significant findings of the present study; to conduct a gender-based comparative study about Muslim men and women academic heads as well as Muslim women and non-Muslim women academic heads; and to replicate this study about Muslim women’s leadership participation in other institutions, such as in government and politics.

4. Conclusions

Based on the research questions more specifically, the study hypotheses, and the study findings, several significant conclusions can be drawn: First, the Muslim women deans have slightly recognized the effectiveness of adopting transformational leadership more frequently than transactional leadership for the realization of high college performance. Second, the Muslim women deans still lack the required emotional intelligence that would result to high college performance and faculty satisfaction. Third, the Muslim women deans consciously recognize the importance of demonstrating the desirable personality traits in dealing with their faculty and staff as pre-condition for better college performance. Finally, based on the Mckinsey's 7S model and the observed range of correlation between the three independent variables and organizational performance which is low to moderate, it can be concluded that the study has partly identified certain gaps that need to be addressed such as the low emotional intelligence of the Muslim women deans. However, the popular preference of the Muslim women deans in using transformational instead of transactional style in managing their colleges, and their high personality traits, are significant because they partly conform to the Mckinsey's model which encourages a democratic style of leadership, high enthusiasm and excellence.

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