Are Male Muslim Leaders More Effective Than Female Muslim Leaders in Maldives Regardless of Their Religiousness

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Abstract: This study explores the moderating role of gender on the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership among leaders of both genders in Maldives. Maldives is a hundred percent Muslim nation, and Islamic Shariah is the law. While women reserve the privilege to hold public office and to practice public functions statistical data indicates a notable underrepresentation of females in leadership positions due to the rigid perception of gender roles embedded in society. Earlier studies conducted in the Maldivian setting suggested that the conservative interpretation of Islam disadvantaged women. Thus, the first objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership and secondly to identify the moderating role of gender on the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership. To achieve these objectives, a sample of 157 useful data was collected from 250 questionnaires distributed to leaders across various domains in the Maldives. The study employed a purposive sampling method from both genders, aged between 30 to 70 years. Out of the two hypotheses tested, results indicated the acceptance of the first hypothesis, establishing a significant relationship between religiosity and leadership. However, the second hypothesis was not supported where gender moderates the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership. This suggests the importance of religiosity in the effectiveness of leadership. Regardless of gender, adherence to a higher level of religiosity contributes positively to leadership effectiveness. Thus, for leaders in Maldives, if they want to be effective leaders, they must be religious regardless of their gender.

Keywords: *Muslim Leader, religiosity, Effective Leadership, Maldives*

1. Introduction and Background

The scholars defined a good leader as someone who is self-aware, proactive, influential in improving others, and ethical. O'Toole and Mayer (2010) assert that effective leadership generates enduring and favorable outcomes by leveraging its personnel to drive high performance inside the organization. Leadership theories examine how actions, qualities, attributes, situations, and power influence are utilized by leaders to affect their subordinates. Leaders can also influence others inside the business who are not under their direct supervision (Yukl, 2013). Good leadership requires innovation in the organization as leaders prioritize experimentation, leading to the production of additional ideas and better organizational performance. (Espedal, 2008; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Several studies have examined the characteristics of leaders (Hunt, 1991; Northouse, 2013; Rost, 1993; Yukl, 2013) and the obstacles women encounter in leadership roles (Adler, 1986; Davidson, 2012; Davidson & Burke, 2004; Foschi, 1996; Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). Multiple studies have emphasized the difference in gender roles and the salary inequality that continues to exist (McCauslan & Kleiner, 1992; Oakley, 2000). The research has overlooked the impact of religiosity and good leadership, as well as the Islamic values of leaders. Leadership is not solely based on gender, as indicated by various studies (Conlin, 2003; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Heilman, 2001; Oakley, 2000; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014; Vecchio, 2002). Many studies have shown that women are increasingly proficient in interpersonal skills (Cooke, 2005; Gipson et al., 2017; McCauslan & Kleiner, 1992; Shaya & Abu Khait, 2017; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005).

Maldives has reached gender parity in education, with women making up the majority of alumni and high achievers in secondary schools and universities. However, they are underrepresented in national, political, and economic domains. The study conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) indicated that Maldives was ranked number 113 out of 145 nations based on their economic investment prospect, educational achievement, healthiness and life expectancy as well as political encouragement. The country scored 0.652 on the equality scale, where 1 represents equality and 0 represents inequality (WEF, 2015). Women face restricted prospects

in both local and national government, particularly in strategic decision-making roles (ADB, 2014). Men experience greater advantages compared to women in the labor market (Profeta, Aliberti, Casarico, D'Amico & Puccio, 2014) and women's engagement in the workforce has decreased (Sulejmani, 2023; Farmer, 2013). Islam is the official religion in the Maldives, and Islamic Sharia law governs the constitution. Both genders have the right to perform their work in whatever post in the organization. El-Horr and Pande (2016) conducted a study that showed that the gender imbalance in Maldives is influenced by the proliferation of a stricter interpretation of Islam that places women in a weak position. The question here is does the insufficiency of women in the top management in Maldives denote that women are less effective managers or leaders?

Since 2008, the government has been the main employer, with a somewhat larger proportion of female employees compared to males (Department of National Planning, 2010). The data collected by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) indicates that there is a limited representation of female workers in professional and senior positions across occupational categories. Representation is more prevalent at the support officer level compared to middle management. Some individuals in this group also work as administrators, teachers, and nurses (HRCM, 2015). While there are no explicit legal discriminations, women encounter significant social and cultural obstacles and stigmatization while seeking public office. The data from multiple sources indicates that men predominantly hold leadership roles in Maldives (HRCM, 2015; Department of National Planning, 2010; WEF, 2015). The study aims to investigate the connection between religiosity and leadership, as well as the influence of gender as a moderator, especially in an Islamic country where Islam is the sole religion and gender equality is established, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status.

The current emphasis on leadership studies in Western contexts is seen as insufficient for comprehending leadership in Muslim communities, namely in the Maldives, where Islam is the sole religion and Islamic Shariah is dominant. The cultural discrepancies in the literature between Western and Muslim countries are mostly influenced by their respective religious beliefs. Jogulu, Uma & Wood, and Glenice (2008) argue that women leaders in Malaysia and Australia are more affected by societal expectations rooted in religious beliefs than their skills at work, in contrast to previous studies on problems encountered by Western women leaders. This emphasizes the importance of studying effective leadership in Muslim communities, where religious devotion ensures gender equality, particularly focusing on understanding leadership dynamics in non-western environments. Research on leadership has primarily concentrated on Western contexts, which may not be directly applicable to the Muslim population in the Maldives, where Islam is the sole religion and Islamic Shariah is the governing legislation.

Western communities have significant differences in the literature compared to Muslim countries. The research focused on the obstacles encountered by female leaders in Western countries (Jones & Solomon, 2019; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Thorn, 2012). Jogulu, Uma, Wood, & Glenice (2008) suggested that the different perceptions of women business leaders in Malaysia and Australia are not because of their competence at work, but rather of their rooted beliefs on the traditional characters and culture of women workers. Therefore, the remark above has led to an examination of successful leadership in Muslim societies, as religiosity grants equal rights to both men and women. This study intends to provide guidance and understanding of leadership dynamics, especially in non-western contexts. Hage and Posner (2015) in their study on religion and leadership, presented that religion and beliefs have a major impact on leadership behavior and decision-making. The findings indicated that religiosity has a limited impact on leadership practices. Therefore, they proposed further investigation on factors such as demographic factors and macro factors to better comprehend how these traits affect the connection between religious affiliation and leadership. Hence, this research particularly highlights the need to explore gender moderation and assess whether religiosity has any impact, whether positive or negative. On the other hand, Dhawan and Sachdeva (2023), in their study found that individual spiritual beliefs of top management managers also will have an impact on their decision-making, and it is influenced by their progression, meta-beliefs as well as the organizational setting.

2. Literature Review

Effective Leadership
According to many authors of management (Pardey, 2007; Rost 1991; Pendleton, 2012) leadership is defined as personalities, characters, behaviors, qualities, influence, communication style, role relationships and managerial positions. The best explanations on leadership are "Leadership is something that people see or experience personally; more specifically it is the relationship between the leader and the people being led" (Pardey, 2007, p. 9); "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 102); "Leadership is to create the conditions for people to thrive, individually and collectively, and achieve significant goals" (Pendleton, 2012, p. 2). All the above definitions suggest that leadership focuses on their actions and conduct that are to give inspiration and impact to their worker. Several definitions exist for leadership, although there is no single acknowledged definition of leadership that can cover the various scenarios that are evident in organizations (Pedler, 2010). Supporting the above, McClelland and Burnham (1995) proposed that leaders are only moderate in their requirement for accomplishment and high in their requirement for power to influence others to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, effective leadership refers to the effective ways leaders lead to achieve the desired goals. Key characteristics of effective leaders as identified by (Pedler, 2010 & Pendleton, 2012), are well-defined interaction, sureness and self-confidence, commanding through example, conducting the operations together with the staff, keeping a positive approach, dedicated transparency as well as endeavors good ethics and integrity.

From an Islamic viewpoint, Beekun and Badawi (1999) suggest that effective leadership can be portrayed when the leader looks for deliberate sustenance from the worker with the ultimate goal of arriving at specific purposes. This meaning recommends that effective leadership is a fundamental procedure where the leader monitors their workers and cannot compel others to do things against their will. Allah says in the Quran (2:256), "There is no compulsion in Faith" […]. In the Islamic leadership model, leaders take up an apparition of generating a society that is welfare-oriented, democratic, and liberated from judgment, manipulation, and cruelty (Mir, 2010). By referring to the definition of Islamic leadership provided by Mir (2010) and Beekun and Badawi (1999), the definitions seem to describe effective leadership characteristics. Thus, if a leader is Islamic, he or she has the characteristics of effective leaders.

Islam views servant-leader and guardian-leader as the primary roles of a leader (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Gardner and Avolio (1998) stated that Islam promotes the concept of believers becoming servant-leaders and guardians. According to Beekun and Badawi (1999), Islam views leaders as servants or guardians, and Muslim leaders might utilize specific power bases to be effective. McClelland (1975 as referenced in Klenke, 2011) argues that effective leadership should begin with the power motive, as power is a key aspect of political interactions and may be obtained through resources, knowledge, and skill. Islam acknowledges authority but recommends self-control (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Power, defined as the capacity to exert influence, is associated with effective leadership, as stated by Northouse (2007). Greenleaf (2002) and Northouse (2007) describe servant leadership as promoting communal ideals, interdependence, respect, trust, and personal growth. According to Northouse (2007), effective servant leaders prioritize conceptualizing, emotionally remedial, prioritizing their followers, serving and developing people, acting or showing the right behavior or ethically, and producing a useful community. In the Quran, Allah commands leaders to have mercy and leniency towards their followers and promote a collective approach to problem-solving. Allay says in the Quran: It is out Allah's mercy that you 'O Prophet' have been lenient with them. Had you been cruel or hard-hearted, they would have certainly abandoned you. So pardon them, ask Allah's forgiveness for them, and consult with them in conducting matters. Once you make a decision, put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who trust him (Quran 3:159).

Servant leaders are transparent, truthful, and just with their followers and do not sacrifice their morals to achieve success (Northouse, 2007). Abu Huraira Narrated: Allah messenger said, if a judge gives a verdict according to the best of his knowledge and his verdict is correct, he will receive double reward and he gives a verdict according to the best of his knowledge and his verdict is wrong, even then he will get a reward (Khan,1986). The hadith emphasizes the sincerity and intention in leadership and an Islamic leader must focus on the intention to uphold justice and make decisions based on the best of their knowledge. Team members are

more inclined to adhere to ethical standards and surmount challenges when they have faith in their leaders (Hoyt, Price, & Poatsy, 2013). When followers view leaders as unethical, it can cause them to feel anxious, pressured, and demotivated at work, which can result in engaging in unproductive behaviors such as cheating on tasks and achieving lower work performance (Gino & Ariely, 2012).

Religiosity

Various definitions of the term "religion" have diverse meanings and interpretations. The first concept is defined as a belief in Allah SWT combined with a dedication to adhere to values thought to be established by Allah SWT (McDaniel & Burnett, 1990, p. 110). Next, a collective system of values and behaviors that pertain to authenticity that is unable to be proven via empirical evidence but is thought to influence the course of nature and human occurrences (Terpstra, 1991, p. 73). It can be described as a structured system of trusts, performs, and practices that aim to enable a connection to the blessed or excellent (such as Allah SWT or ultimate truth) and promote a sympathetic of one's relationship and obligations to others within a society (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2004, p. 18). Furthermore, it can be described as a social structure created to collectively address the uncertainties and mysteries of human existence, including life, death, and moral dilemmas.

Religion is seen as a universal aspect of human society, encompassing beliefs, symbols, values, and rituals that individuals use to make sense of their existence. Islam is the predominant religion in the nation where this study was conducted. Shah (2015) defines Islam as a major international religion that emphasizes devotion to Allah SWT's will and command, including both spiritual and daily aspects of life. It guides people and groups on how to navigate life in this world, outlining their rights and responsibilities towards self and society, as well as how to earn favor from Allah SWT in this life and the afterlife.

According to a study by Wan Ahmad et al. (2008), Islamic religiosity is influenced by factors such as faith (iman), actions ('amal), fear and awe (taqwa), and the practice of ibadah and other religious duties as taught in Islamic teachings, especially in terms of moral behavior (akhlaq). According to Beekun and Badawi (1999), a Muslim leader must follow the commands of Allah SWT and his Prophet (SAW) to serve Allah SWT and acquire a good and strong Islamic ethical personality. That particular individual's ethical charm will be demonstrated in his or her unwavering confidence in Allah SWT as he evolvements through four phases of spiritual development, which are Iman (faith), Islam, Taqwa (Allah SWT-consciousness), and Ihsan (excellence) (AlSarhi, Salleh, Mohamed, & Amini, 2014; Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Beekun and Badawi (1999) state that a leader with strong faith will view themselves and their belongings as belonging to Allah SWT. They also mention that a strong faith leader will be accountable for all their actions and will consistently prioritize beneficial activities. This argument emphasizes the connection between faith (religiosity) and successful leadership. The current study is founded on proposing a direct correlation between religion and the successful leadership of Muslim leaders.

Maudoodi (1976) asserts that Islam, or a'mal is the tangible manifestation of man. He compares the relationship between iman and Islam to that of a seed and a plant, where iman is considered as the seed and Islam is considered as its fruition (Wan Ahmad, Ab Rahman, Ali & Che Seman, 2008). A leader who totally practices and follows Islam will never think that he, himself is a superior due to his iman (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). On the other hand, he will hold a position as a Khalifah of Allah SWT. Taqwa is defined as a person who surrenders to Allah SWT within the context of Islam and cultivates a profound reverence for Allah SWT. Taqwa is the inner realization of one's obligation towards Allah SWT and the sense of accountability to Allah SWT. Taqwa prevents Muslims from acting unfairly and unreasonably. Muslims must adhere to Islamic teachings, including their virtues and vices, which are influenced by terror and a sense of awe (taqwa), leading them to do the required ibadah and conduct as described in the teachings (Wan Ahmad et al., 2008).

Religiosity and Leadership

Many leadership materials are now incorporating religious themes and models into workplace contexts. A study by Ayranci, Evren & Semerciöz, and Fatih (2011) found a statistically significant but extremely modest association between religion and spiritual leadership. Fry (2003) suggested that spiritual leaders use spiritual resources in social situations to adhere to divine or higher rules in their daily lives, following Allah SWT's plan. Green, Chavez, Lopez & Gonzalez (2011) found the connections between leaders' virtues and religiosity. Religiosity was found to have a strong negative connection with transformative leadership in a multiple-regression study. The study found a strong negative correlation between followers' perception of leaders as

transformational and their maturity and religiosity. Results may vary for Muslims because of differing measurements of religion. Non-Muslims' religiosity is different as going to church once a day is considered pious and their religious aspect is a separate entity. Hence, the results indicating the negative correlation are not surprising. This study has established a path to investigate the correlation between servant leadership style and religiosity in Islam.

Hage and Posner (2015) inspected the correlation between a leader's religious affiliation and religiosity. They found that leadership practices among Christian and Muslim organizational leaders in Lebanon, a non-western nation. The study runs multiple regression analyses using transformational leadership to find the impact of religious membership and religiosity on leadership behaviors. Religious affiliation and religiosity explained 21 percent of the variance in transformational leadership behaviors in the sample. The religious affiliation of the respondent had a greater influence on leadership behaviors rather than the level of their religiosity. The results align with findings that religion shows a crucial role in effective leadership and religious beliefs impact leadership style by influencing how individuals process information and decision making. Although troubling, the study's findings indicate that religiosity had a minimal impact on explaining leadership practices. This prompts the question of how religious affiliation might impact leadership behavior without affecting one's commitment to the beliefs and values of that faith. The previous study did not specifically examine the correlation between religiosity and successful leadership in Muslims. However, it laid the groundwork for further research on religiosity and effective leadership.

Islamic excellent character requires leaders to uphold principles. In their 2008 study, Wan Ahmad et al. uniquely assessed religiosity by examining various aspects of Islam and exploring the different stages of hukum, which include obligation (wajib), recommendation (sunnah), and prohibition (haram) according to Shariah laws. The investigation noted the differences in taklif (strictly mandatory) requirements between males and females for their obligations such as paying zakat and fitrah as well as going to the mosque for congregational prayer. The Quran instructs leaders to uphold ethics, morality, and lessons to serve Allah sincerely. Islam's religiosity is founded on faith, akhlaq, and Shariah (Wan Ahmad et al, 2008). These factors are believed to be correlated with leadership.
H1: There is a relationship between religiosity and leadership.

The moderating role of gender on the relationship between Religiosity and Leadership
Islamic worldview emphasizes that good leadership is not solely based on gender. In Islam, leadership does not discriminate based on gender. Religion plays a significant role in influencing women's job paths. Studies have shown that religion tends to support traditional gender roles, where women are expected to focus on home duties rather than professional pursuits. Gender-based roles are prevalent in various religions, including Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Different interpretations of women's societal roles can be found within these religions.

Islam instructs Muslim women, like males, to be involved in community matters. Women are allowed and supported to participate in politics as long as it does not interfere with their main responsibilities as spouses and mothers. Women are not allowed to occupy leadership roles such as Khalifa, Mu'awin, Wali, 'Amil, or any other role related to ruling. Jawad et al. (2009) assert that this hadith implies that women are less equipped intellectually and emotionally to manage public duties. Some experts explain that this hadith does not imply that women are inferior or unable to take on leadership roles in Islam. Identifying a deficit in one woman does not imply that it is common. Some women have talents and abilities that surpass those of men (Muhibbu-Din, 2019). The Islamic rules explicitly forbid women from holding ruling positions (Muhibbu-Din, 2019). Literature from the global perspective emphasizes progressing issues such as gender bias in leadership. Women in leadership face numerous, significant, and challenging obstacles, however, there are women in various sectors who successfully overcome these problems daily (Lord, 2003). Afkhami, Eisenberg, and Vaziri (2001) argue that women have varying degrees of problems globally, with stereotypes being prevalent worldwide and women often being perceived primarily as family caretakers. Davidson and Burke (2004) discovered that obstacles such as limited access to professional networks, longer work hours, heightened parenting responsibilities, and lingering prejudice and discrimination can impede women's career advancement.

Women are perceived to have a gender edge in contemporary businesses due to their possession of leadership

skills linked to success (Conlin, 2003; Riggio, 2010). It was expected that as women's educational attainment increased and societal attitudes towards gender equality evolved, women would transition into leadership roles. Data suggests that women's advancement in management has been gradual and inconsistent (Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). The reason why the number of women holding a high position in the organization is due to women's leadership abilities are not valued as highly as men's (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). According to Fondas (1997), in administrative settings, feminine attributes involve exerting control, sharing responsibility, assisting others, and establishing a network of relationships, all of which are consistent with women's conduct.

Religious literature commonly highlights the concept that women tend to be more religious and obey Allah's commands than men (Mohomed, 2023; Francis, 1997; Thompson, 1991). Feltey and Poloma (1991) discovered that women indicated higher rates of church attendance. It is reported that Muslim women feel closer to Allah SWT. They enjoy their life with their husbands, children, and family as well as their higher status in Islam. Additionally, the equality rights in their duties compared to Western women (Amin, 2023). Rohman (2013) suggested that female researchers believe that the oppression of women in Muslim society is due to a patriarchal interpretation by males rather than Islam itself. The study emphasized authors who acknowledge that gender inequality in Islam was evident during the Abasiyah era (750-1258 AD), characterized by a male-centered and sexist society.

Based on the research, the following conceptual framework is suggested. Religiosity is the independent variable (IV) and effective leadership is the dependent variable (DV) in this conceptual framework. Islam's religiosity is founded on faith, Akhlaaq, and Shariah according to Wan Ahmad et al. (2008). These factors are believed to be correlated with the dependent variable, leadership. Leadership is associated with conceptualizing, emotional healing, prioritizing followers, fostering their growth and success, acting morally, empowering, and generating value for society (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Northouse, 2007). The moderating variable gender, as stated in the literature by Rohman (2013), suggests that in Muslim culture, women face obstacles in leadership positions due to interpretations by men rather than inherent to Islam.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
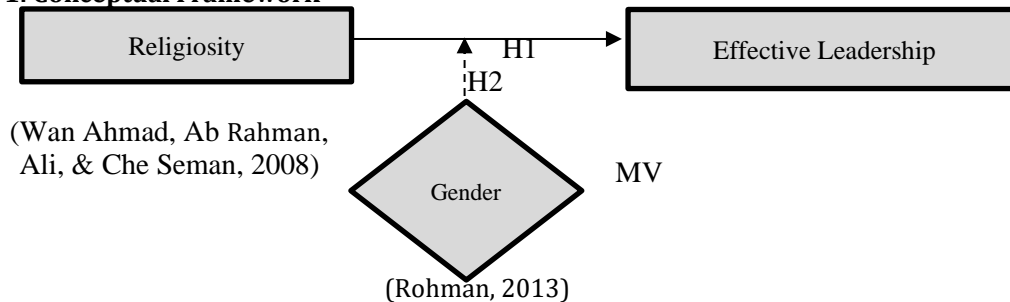
3. Research Methodology

This is a quantitative and cross-sectioned research. The sample for this study was Maldivian leaders from various sectors including leaders from political, public, and private organizations who are in supervisory positions and above and between the age of 30 -70 years. The age category is chosen because workers above this age category are mature (Oshagbemi, 2004). The business leaders were selected based on publicly recognized leading business organizations, especially the media and social platforms. Therefore, the sample for this study includes leaders above the supervisory level in both public and private sector organizations. Purposive convenience sampling was employed to gather information quickly and efficiently from reflective members of the community such as leaders who are willing to contribute their knowledge to this study. Quota sampling was not chosen because the present study did not aim to compare different leaders from different sectors.

Since the population size was hardly determined, G* Power 3.1.9.7 was utilized (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2013). The parameters used for this software were as follows; effect size index f2 =0.15,α=0.05, and the number of predictors is 4 (Leadership, Religiosity, Gender, Religiosity and Leadership x Gender) and the power was set at 95%. Accordingly, the sample size required for this model is 129.

Instrumentation
The survey questionnaire was derived from previous studies to assess the factors. This study included closed-ended questions. The questionnaire in section A was created to collect demographic information from the respondents that are considered to have an impact on leadership. This section includes the control variables: age, education, and organization tenure. Religiosity, the independent variable, is assessed in section B. This study employed the instrument to assess the religiosity of leaders (Wan Ahmad et al., 2008). This instrument was used for the study since it covers all facets of Islam. The Muslim participants in the study were requested to rate their level of religiosity using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with options from "never" to "always" for the Islamic Shariah and akhlaq issues (issues 1-15). The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements on faith. Items 16-22 were rated on a scale from "1" (Strongly Disagree) to "5" (Strongly Agree).

Effective leadership, the dependent variable in section C, is assessed using the instrument created and confirmed by Liden et al. (2008). The questionnaire uses Likert scales ranging from 1 to 6 to evaluate the leadership effectiveness of respondents based on their level of agreement or disagreement. The Likert scale of 1-6 was chosen instead of the usual 1-7 scale because the questionnaire was originally designed using a Likert scale of 1-7. 4 = Undecided, 5 = Partially Agree, 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly Agree. The option "Undecided" has been eliminated from the scale. There are two causes. Leaders in nature are typically decisive, a trait strongly linked to leadership according to Northouse (2007). It is expected that leaders will react to each issue. Morgan (2017) states that the typical method for constructing a scale from Likert-scored items involves evaluating their reliability through Cronbach's alpha, which relies on correlations. The number of response points researchers have, or how the variables are scored, does not impact the capacity to calculate correlations. The questionnaire consists of 28 items that assess seven key elements of effective leadership that are conceptualization, emotional healing, prioritizing followers, fostering the growth of followers and success, ethical behavior, empowerment, and producing value for the community.

4. Results

To fulfill the survey criteria of collecting 129 data points, 250 questionnaires were given to leaders across all sectors in the Maldives, anticipating a 50% response rate. A Google survey was sent over social media, and data gathering lasted for two weeks. Overall, 168 responses were obtained, and the rate of responses was 67.2%, which exceeded the expected 50%. Out of all the questionnaires received, 157 were deemed suitable for analysis, while 11 were incomplete and invalid, making it 22% of the total. The final response rate for this study is 45.2%, which is considered sufficient for the research as it exceeded the recommended sample size.

In this study, respondents' age, education level, and organization tenure were considered control factors. It was crucial to control these variables to adequately study the links between predictors and the dependent variable without any interference from control variables. The study accounted for age, education level, and organization tenure using a careful sample selection process. Table 1.0 indicates that these variables had no impact on effective leadership or religiosity. The chart indicated that age, education level, and organization tenure did not correlate with religiosity or leadership. This section provides results on respondents' experiences with network operators, the characteristics of the total sample, and a comparison of participants based on demographic such as gender, age, education level and geographic factors that is region.

Demographic Profile
Out of the respondents, 53.5% were male (N=84), while 46.5% were female (N=73). The majority of respondents fell within the age range of thirty to thirty-nine years old comprising 72% (N= 113), followed by forty to forty-nine years old at 21.7% (N=80). The least number of respondents were in the age group of fifty to fifty-nine age group with 6.4% (N=10). The respondents from the age group of sixty to sixty-nine and seventy years and above age group above were nil. The education level of respondents shows that most of the respondents were bachelor's certificate holders 38.9% (N=61), followed by master's degree holders34.4% (N= 54). Among the respondents, 16.6%, (N=26) have acquired higher secondary education and only 10.2% of respondents (N=16) have accomplished secondary education. In terms of Organization tenure respondents 45.9%(N=72) had more than ten years of service. The second most significant was 4-6 years of service with respondents 17.2% (N=27). The third was 6-10 years of service with 16.6% (N=26), followed by

respondents 12.1%(N=19) worked for 2-4 years of service, and 8.3% (N=13) worked for 1-2 years of service.

Descriptive Analysis
For effective leadership, the mean score was interpreted using the researcher's scale which was determined by 3 divisions of 6 (2, 4, 6), the levels of the mean score below 2 are considered low, 2.1 - 4 as moderate above 4 as high. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations of religiosity and leadership. The mean score for religiosity is 4.1141(SD = 0.40213), this indicates that the religiosity level of respondents is in the high range. The mean score for effective leadership is 5.0307 (SD= 0.49417), showing that the leadership among respondents is also at a high level.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religiosity	157	4.1141	0.40213
Effective Leadership	157	5.0307	0.49417
Valid N (listwise)	157		

Table 2 shows the mean scores compared for the moderating variable, that is gender. The mean scores indicated that effective leadership level is higher in both males and females. The mean score of males is 5.0344 (SD = 0.51851) while the mean score of females is 5.0264 (SD= 0.46812).

Table 2: Mean Scores for both genders in terms of Effective leadership

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	84	5.0344	.51851
Female	73	5.0264	.46812
Total	157	5.0307	.49417

Normality Test
This normality test is to test the normality for all the variables that were examined based on skewness, kurtosis, and their respective standardized values. For a sample that was normally distributed, the reading of the value of skewness and kurtosis (z-value) should be in the range of -1.96 to +1.96 and the value of the mean should be the same as the value of its median (Cain, Zhang, & Yuan, 2017). The findings below showed that for religiosity skewness of -0.499 (SE 0.194) and a kurtosis of 0.904 (SE 0.385) and for effective leadership a skewness of -0.342(SE = 0.194) and kurtosis of 0.148 (SE 0.385). This indicates that the z-value of skewness and kurtosis for religiosity is in the span of -2.57 to + 2.34 and the value of the mean was the same as the value of its median.

Table 3: Normality test

		Religiosity	Effective Leadership
Mean		4.1141	5.0307
Median		4.1364	5.0357
Skewness		-.499	-.342
Std. Error of Skewness		.194	.194
Kurtosis		.904	.148
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.385	.385
N	Valid	157	157
	Missing	0	0

Upon evaluating for gender, Table 4 shows males with a skewness of -0.471 (SE 0.263) and a kurtosis of 0.440 (SE 0.520) and for females a skewness of -0.152 (SE = 0.281) and kurtosis of -0.319 (SE 0.555), this indicates that the sample was normally distributed. Furthermore, the value of skewness and kurtosis. Both are in the span of -1.96 to +1.96. On the other hand, the value of the mean was the same as the value of its median (Cain et al., 2017).

Table 4: Skewness and Kurtosis for Gender

Gender			Statistic	Std. Error
Effective Leadership	Male	Mean	5.0344	0.05657
		Median	5.0000	
		Skewness	-0.471	0.263
		Kurtosis	0.440	0.520
	Female	Mean	5.0264	0.05479
		Median	5.0714	
		Skewness	-0.152	0.281
		Kurtosis	-0.319	0.555

Multicollinearity
This test is to detect whether multicollinearity exists. The variance-inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance of each variable were calculated. The result of variance-inflation factor (VIF) values above 10 indicates that this research has a multicollinearity problem. Table 5 indicated no major issue of multicollinearity.

Table 5: Multicollinearity

Model		Tolerance >.10	VIF <10
1	(Constant)		
	Obligations	0.724	1.381
	Recommendations	0.794	1.26
	Prohibitions	0.869	1.151
	Akhlaq	0.812	1.232
	Faith	0.91	1.099

Dependent Variable: Effective Leadership

Homoscedasticity
The homoscedasticity test will test the means that the variance of the outcome variable should be stable at all levels of the predictor variable (Field, 2013). If the scores cluster around the regression line between each variable, it is considered homoscedasticity violated. Based on Figure 1 the scatterplot distribution for regression analysis is homoscedastic.

Figure 2: **Homoscedasticity assumption between religiosity and Effective Leadership**
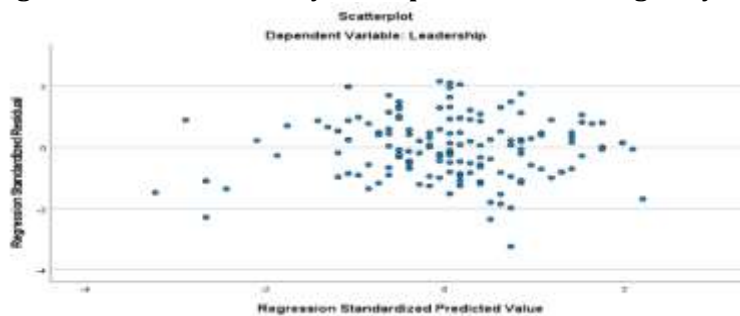
Autocorrelation
To detect the presence of autocorrelation in the data, this study tests the error term in the regression equation for the serial relationship. This test is done by employing the Durbin–Watson test. It will test whether the residuals in the model are correlated or otherwise (Field, 2013). The value must be in the range of 0 and 4, where the value of 2 indicates that the residuals are uncorrelated. If the value is more than 2, it shows that the residuals have a negative correlation. On the other hand, if the value is less than 2, it implies that the residuals have a positive correlation. In this study, Durbin Watson has a value of 2.027, and it reveals that there is no autocorrelation problem exists in this model. It can be shown in the table below:

Table 6: Durbin Watson Test (Regression between Individual Variable with Leadership)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.408[a]	.166	.161	.45266	2.027

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity
b. Dependent Variable: Effective Leadership

Homogeneity of variance
Homogeneity of variance is the test to analyze the variances of two samples or groups, whether they are approximately equal or homogeneous. Therefore, the test for equality of variance named Levene's Test is conducted. This test analyses whether the two variances, that are males and females have the same nature, or whether the groups have the same kind of variability. Levene's result shows that P > 0.05, hence, it is not significant. It denotes that the variances are not significantly different, and therefore, the variances are assumed to be equal and homogeneity of variance has been met. These results are indicated in table 7.

Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Effective Leadership	Based on Mean	.021	1	155	.886
	Based on Median	.023	1	155	.881
	Based on the Median and with adjusted df	.023	1	146.651	.881
	Based on trimmed mean	.035	1	155	.851

Regression Analysis
A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between religiosity and leadership. To answer the first research question(Q1) Is there a relationship between effective leadership and religiosity in Maldives? The first hypothesis (*H_1: There is a significant relationship between religiosity and effective leadership*) was tested using linear regression analysis to find out whether it was accepted or rejected. Table 8 shows the results of a linear regression performed between religiosity and leadership. The relationship between variables illustrated a moderate positive linear relationship between religiosity and effective leadership, r=.496, p (2-tailed) < .000.

Table 8: Linear regression performed between religiosity and leadership

	Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		6.982	.000		
Religiosity	0.496	7.107	.000	1.000	1.000
R		0.496[a]			
Adjusted R Square	241				
R Square Change	0.246				
F	50.515				
Sig.	.000[b]				

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity
b. Dependent Variable: Effective Leadership

The table above shows that the value of R^2 is 0.246, which signifies that religiosity explained 24.6% of the variation in leadership. It also signifies that another 75.4% of the variation in effective leadership is being explained by other variables. Although R^2 is low for this study, it could be the best-fit model for leadership Frost (2019). This is because of several reasons such as a larger volume of unexplainable variation and in those areas or the studies attempting to enlighten the human behavior that generally the value of R^2 is bound to be lower or it is less than 50%. It is very difficult to predict human behavior compared to other things such as physical processes. (Frost, 2019). The data shows F-ratio is 50.515, which is significant at p < .001. According to Field

(2013) a good model should have a value of more than 1.

To answer research question 2, the research hypothesis was: **H2: *Gender moderates the relationship between religiosity and Effective leadership.*** Hypothesis 2 was tested using hierarchical regression analysis to test whether the hypothesis was accepted or rejected. This hypothesis was confirmed by hierarchical regression using Hayes Process Macro for SPSS 27. Model 1 was selected in the Process Macro to show the interaction between religiosity and gender (Hayes, 2012). The statistical interaction effect of both variables on another variable is known as the moderation effect (Field, 2013). Since the p-value is P <0. 9042, thus, the results indicate that the interaction is not significant. Table 9 shows the Hayes Process Macro result.

Table 9: Test of Highest Order Unconditional Interaction (Hayes Process Macro)

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	0.0001	0.0151	1	153	0.9024

Focal prediction: Religiosity (X)
Moderating variable: Gender (W)

To visualize the conditional effect on the predictor, a graph was plotted. Interestingly, even though the test of moderation indicates no significant results, Figure 6 shows a slight difference between genders on who is more effective when both are religious. Figure 3 displays the Gender moderating relationship between religiosity and effective leadership. It is found that the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership is stronger among males as the slope is steeper for males. Therefore, when male leaders are religious, they turn to show a more effective leadership style than female leaders if they are religious.

Figure 3: Gender moderating relationship between religiosity and effective leadership
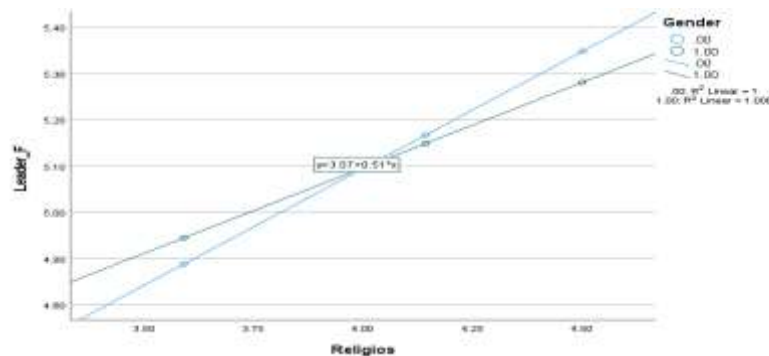
Discussion
The analysis shows a moderate positive linear relationship between religiosity and effective leadership. The results have supported the study done by Beekun and Badawi (1999) and McDaniel and Burnett (1990). Both of the studies found that a leader (*Khalifah*) who has a very strong and firm *iman* towards Allah SWT, will take care and be responsible for all their saying and action because they know that Allah is looking at them at all times no matter where they are. Hence, they will continuously (*istiqomah*) do good things and promote good behavior. Moreover, the finding supported the analysts who have deduced that a faithful and pious Muslim has good character which is good conduct, very ethical, good morals and values (Fernando & Jackson, 2006). Literature suggests that individuals' conduct and behavior conform to their religious beliefs (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). Besides, individuals who hold strong Islamic values are better servant leaders as those leaders emphasize that through trust-based attributes the leader becomes a role model in values and behavior (effective leadership). Thus, the high mean score of religiosity values held by Maldivian leaders in the present study indicated that their style towards their followers which is to achieve frame alignment and develop trust to behave as a role model, constitutes the importance given by Maldivian leaders following effective leadership style. Many authors stated that effective leadership hold great ethical behavior, are very honest and become good followers. Furthermore, effective leaders are not going to compromise especially on their ethical principles even though to achieve victory (Hoyt et al., 2013; Northouse, 2007, 2013). A good and ethical leader

will produce good and ethical followers (Albdareen, Al-Gharaibeh, Alraqqad & Maswadeh 2024). For them, Allah is the virtue and the utmost important thing in their life.

The item of honesty over profits had the highest mean score among effective leadership items. Those leaders who value honesty over profits would not wait for others to remind them about what is right or what is proper to impress others. An honest person will always value truthfulness and believe that others will trust him or her (including his or her actions). Therefore, he or she would be proactive in telling the truth about anything. Besides, this indicates the link between Akhlaq and the conduct of Muslim leaders which determines the way they behave in their daily lives. This also has been supported by authors as they state that Muslim entrepreneurs should hold good behaviour including being ethical and honest in whatever they are doing (Akbar Ahmed, 1985; Wilson, 2006). According to Wilson (2006), In Islamic teaching, Allah will give His blessings to those who are practicing good behavior. When they practice this, they are indirectly showing the non-Muslims that Muslims have good values and therefore, the community will be harmonious and peaceful. In this kind of environment, the Muslim entrepreneur can do business better and thus, will improve the Muslim's economy. For this reason, it was not an amazement to find honesty to be a common value among all respondents who were all Muslims in a community like Maldives. In addition to this, high mean scores of Shariah items indicated that Islamic Shariah has been practiced in the Maldives and Islamic Shariah has been given the utmost importance in the country. Islamic Shariah is the law and the constitution of the country is guided by the standards of Islam. Although prohibitions fall under shariah in Islam, these items contributed to high mean scores such as the items 'I have taken interest or riba'. The reason for the above is assumed to be in the high end due to the lack of Islamic banks that conduct trade and banking activities in line with the principles of Islamic Shariah. To summarize, the level of religiosity is high among the leaders and most of the attributes of effective leadership are followed by Maldivian leaders. Thus, many authors supported the positive link between religiosity and effective leadership that has been found in this study. Besides Islamic Shariah is given utmost importance in the Maldivian community.

This result of the hypothesis tested using multiple regression analysis indicated that gender has no significant relationship between religiosity and effective leadership and it is not moderating that relationship as well. The regression results showed that there is no significant relationship between gender and the interaction between religiosity and effective leadership. With regards to the negative link shown by the moderating variable, gender, this denies the findings from the research conducted by El-Horr and Pande (2016) as the authors suggested that a key factor in women's underrepresentation in Maldives is the spread of an increasing conservative interpretation of Islam that consigns women to the sphere of the family, suggesting that gender-unequal social norms that disadvantage women. However, the empirical evidence of the findings stated that religiosity is not significant and did not play an important character for women in lower echelons of the workplace and the community.

Moreover, this study has contrasted with the views presumed by Jogulu and Wood (2008) who claimed that the perception of Mulim women leaders is different for Malaysians and Australians. This is not because they are relatively adequate in the working environment, but it is because of their strong religious beliefs in them. However, the above findings do not support this study. The common attributes followed in Maldives as well as in Malaysia, since the majority of the religion is Muslim in both countries. Therefore, in conjunction with the findings of this study, indicate that neither gender nor religiosity moderates the relationship between religiosity and leadership. It indicates that if a leader is religious, he or she is an effective leader. Moreover, this research addressed the concern for further research that was raised by Hage and Posner (2015) who indicated that it would be useful to comprehend other characteristics such as age, gender and sectors or industries that have influenced or moderated the impact of religious affiliation. Thus, the above statement opens up for further investigations, which provides empirical evidence for the concern of gender moderating religiosity and leadership. The findings of the research supported the views of (Conlin, 2003; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Oakley, 2000; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Vecchio, 2002) who claimed that effective leadership is not exclusively founded on gender. However, the authors state that women are progressively effective in interpersonal skills and past investigations have accentuated the interpersonal skills of women which are inborn qualities (Cooke, 2005; Gipson et al., 2017; McCauslan & Kleiner, 1992; Shaya & Abu Khait, 2017; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). The graph showed that the relationship between religiosity and leadership is stronger among males as the slope is steeper for males. Therefore, when male leaders are religious, they turn

up to show more effective leaders than female leaders if they are religious. For this reason, organizations need to consider including religiosity awareness and teachings in a training module so that leaders are becoming more religious to be effective.

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Based on the finding religiosity has a significant relationship with leadership, this indicates that a leader utilizes a variety of the dimensions of religiosity to specific situations in everyday life. Roccas (2005) in his study concluded that religiosity and values have a high correlation. To develop this characteristic he should focus on moral development, in the context of the school environment to enhance the development at an early stage. Besides, the school environment or its programs should surrogate social and moral development, a behavior includes helping others, sharing with someone and other apparently intentional and positive behaviors for which the purpose is unknown and unspecified.

The most interesting finding of this study lies in the items of the mean score for prohibitions. While the reason believed is due to the lack of Islamic Banks in the country, it is recommended to introduce banks that adhere to Islamic law. At an organization level, training can be offered in the field of religiosity that could improve the values of a person holding onto. It is recommended to offer the element of religiosity and its benefits must be included. That means the understanding of Islamic principles or the right knowledge of Islam should be emphasized so that employees will be committed to doing work for the sake of Allah S.W.T. The leadership training can be integrated with Islamic settings and values with stories of historical role models that tone for the best example, guided by Islamic beliefs and practices. In other words, the training must be implemented in a way to make sense of the present by tightfitting the past. The stories of successful Muslim leaders could encourage future leaders to be and it becomes role models and occupy the minds and hearts of many followers Cultural awareness is of utmost importance in the community. Although the whole community is Muslim, leaders need to be aware of the multicultural individuals who work in an organization. Many of the workers are expatriates who do not follow Islam. According to Faris and Abdalla (2018), social awareness will diminish vagueness and it can improve leaders' and followers' ability to achieve their objectives. Therefore, it is very difficult to build interaction between the leaders and followers as well as understand the culture of one organization. The leader has to plan, organize, lead, and empower cross-cultural followers.

Conclusion
The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership and the moderating role of gender. This study is based in the Maldives. The author endeavors to explore the current issues of religiosity and effective leadership in Maldives and the moderating role of gender.

This study employed a purposive convenience sampling technique and a total of 168 responses were received from the expected 250 questionnaires that were initially distributed. After checking all the returned questionnaires, the total usable responses for further analysis was 157. This study addressed many of the author's recommendations for future research, which is to include gender as a moderator. Second, the findings of this study rejected the views of authors El-Horr and Pande (2016) claiming that women are underrepresented due to extreme religious beliefs held in the country. Overall, the findings have given a useful insight that gender does not moderate the relationship between religiosity and effective leadership. Thus, paving the way for future research to explore the issue further. The results have fulfilled both research objectives. Based on the finding religiosity has a significant relationship with effective leadership, this indicates that a leader utilizes a variety of the dimensions of religiosity in specific situations in everyday life.

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