

Stream: Women, Life Stages and Religious Identity: Rethinking Inclusion in Organizations

Issues related to the intersections of female employees' religious identity and age, whether considered directly or in their interactions, have been shown to significantly shape workplace experiences and outcomes (Park & Martinez, 2022). Women navigate these identities at different stages of their lives and careers and encounter opportunities and barriers related to their own and wider cultural norms, organizational policies, and various societal expectations. It has been noted that these factors are particularly challenging for older women, especially when they visibly express their religious identity. For example, Muslim women are generally underrepresented in employment and leadership positions in organizations (Tariq & Syed, 2018). Despite increasing access to higher education, they struggle in the labor market (Zwysen & Longhi, 2016). These challenges can relate to biases and stereotypes that hinder their career progression, sense of belonging, and access to opportunities (Héliot et al., 2020). This is often more complex for Muslim women due to the visibility of their religious identity, particularly when wearing the hijab (Halrynjo & Jonker, 2016).

Integrating AI and algorithmic decision-making in workplace processes, such as recruitment, performance evaluation, promotion, and compensation, presents opportunities and challenges for equity and inclusion. While AI can potentially enhance efficiency and fairness by optimizing hiring and evaluation processes, its implementation often embeds historical biases and majority norms into organizational decision-making (Van de Poel, 2020). These biases disproportionately affect women, older workers, and those who visibly express their religious identity, risking alienation and exclusion from opportunities (Krupiy, 2020; Munoko et al., 2020). Despite assumptions that AI tools are inherently neutral and any deviance is correctable, discriminatory biases in algorithms can persist, undermining transparency, fairness, and trust in these systems.

This stream seeks to explore how religious identity and age impact workplace inclusion, equity, and success. We further invite contributions that critically examine any implications of AI and algorithmic decision-making on these dimensions, and research that explores actionable strategies to foster inclusive practices.

Potential areas of exploration include:

- How do religious identity and age, independently or interactively, influence career opportunities for women, their workplace belonging, and access to leadership roles?
- What is the existing and emerging role of AI in perpetuating biases related to religious identity and age in key organizational processes?
- What are the emerging organizational practices and leadership styles that mitigate the negative impacts of AI and promote inclusion across these dimensions?

This stream encourages submissions that provide theoretical, empirical, or practice-based insights into these issues. By focusing on these dimensions, we aim to better understand these equity challenges in an AI age and to encourage innovative approaches to equity, diversity, and inclusion suited to these new organizational realities. This stream aligns with SDG 10 (reducing inequalities) and SDG 5 (gender equality).

Keywords: Religious identity, age, women, implicit bias, intersectionality, systematic inequality, leadership, representation, organizational culture, change

Themes

Religious Identity in the Workplace

- What challenges do women face in balancing religious identity with professional expectations?
- How does the visibility of religious identity (e.g., attire or practices) influence workplace inclusion?
- What are the unique challenges faced by women in relation to workplace discrimination and bias?
- How do generational differences shape perceptions of inclusion and equity for Muslim women?

Intersectionality of age and religious identity of women

- How do age and religion intersect to influence the workplace experiences of employees, particularly women?
- How do societal norms about age, gender, and religious identity impact the workplace experiences of women in different industries and regions?
- How do challenges differ for women across different life stages (e.g., early-career, mid-career, late-career)?
- How do older women experience ageism alongside religious and gendered discrimination?

- What roles are played by support systems within and outside of organizational boundaries to support women in different life stages?

Leadership and Representation

- How do women experience and interact with potential barriers to workplace leadership and representation? How do these barriers differ for women who express their religious identity?
- How do religious stereotypes impact career progression? How can organizations address these barriers (role of mentorship)?
- How can organizations ensure fair representation of Muslim women in leadership positions?
- What are the long-term career impacts of discrimination for women at different life stages?

Advocacy, Change and Resilience

- What strategies have successfully driven change in workplace cultures to support religious identity, women, and life stage diversity?
- What mechanisms do women at different life stages utilize to challenge or overcome potential barriers at work?
- How do women in different career stages combat systematic bias in organizations? Are younger women more combative to systematic bias in organizational settings?

Organizational Policies and Practices

- How does the visibility of religious practices (e.g., Hijab for Muslim women or wearing a cross necklace for Christian women) have implications for workplace inclusion?
- What organizational policies and practices can be enacted to foster inclusion and accommodations for women at different life stages?
- What is the role of organizational cultures in promoting inclusive cultures for Muslim women?

- How can positive organizational practices, like psychological safety, support employees navigating religious expression and life-stage challenges?

Future of Work

- How do emerging trends (eg, like remote work, AI in recruitment, and gig economy) create opportunities or challenges for rethinking inclusion?
- What role can technology play in addressing or exacerbating bias against women who visibly express their religious identity? (eg, promotion, recruitment, and workplace management)
- How can organizations adapt future workplace strategies to support the diverse needs of women?

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