

Muslim clients

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Submission date: 16-Apr-2021 09:02AM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 1560922936

File name: Counselling_of_Muslim_immigrant_clients.edited_1.docx (27.87K)

Word count: 2993

Character count: 16550

COUNSELING OF MIGRANT MUSLIM CLIENTS

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Socio-Cultural and Demographic Background

Muslims are people who follow or practice Islam. Islam is the second-largest religion after Christianity. It is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion that follows the prophet and messenger of God Mohamed. The religion originated in the Middle East in the 7th century C.E. Today, it will have around 1.9 billion people associated with Islam. This translates to about 24.9% of the world's total population. This means that a fifth of the world's population is Muslim. Most of the ³ Muslims live in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region (91%). The other areas where the Muslim community is highly dominant are Central Asia (81%) and the Caucasus (65%). Muslims only make 1% of the total population in the United States and 6% in Europe. There are two main Muslim denominations; the Sunnis and the Shias. The Sunnis is the largest faction consisting of about 85-90% of the world's Muslims. Shia Islam, the other smaller Islam branch, consists of 10-15% of the Muslim population. The largest Muslim-majority nation in the world is Indonesia. Islam is considered to be the fastest-growing population in the world (Schadler, 2017).

The Muslim religion is anchored in the Five Pillars of Islam. These pillars are Shahadah, salah, sawm, zakat, and hajj. Shahada means the declaration of faith. To be converted to Islam, you have to worship Allah (God) and bear witness to Muhammed, the messenger of God. Shahada declares belief in one God (Allah), unlike Christianity which beliefs in Trinity ⁴ (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the acceptance of Muhammad as the messenger of God. The other pillar is salah which translates to the daily prayers. Muslims pray to stand and later to kneel while reciting the holy book of the Quran. Muslims are supposed to pray five times every day at prescribed times. It is these prayers that collectively form the second pillar of Islam. The prayers are done in the morning (Fajr), noon (Zuhr), late in the afternoon (Asr), dusk (Maghrib), and sunset prayers (Isha). Muslims are also supposed to fast during the holy month of Ramadan, which forms the third pillar of Islam (Dilangalen,

& Dilangalen, 2019). During this fasting period, Muslims are forbidden from eating or drinking between dawn and sunset. Zakat involves almsgiving, whereby every Muslim is required to give to the poor. The last pillar of Islam is Hajj which is the pilgrimage to Mecca. Every adult physically and financially able Muslim is supposed to visit Mecca's holy city at least once in his/her lifetime.

Like other cultures, Muslims have distinct customs and beliefs. They have unique dressing codes and eating habits. They only eat the food permitted and will not eat or drink anything that is considered forbidden (haram). Muslims usually invoke Allah's name when killing an animal for eating. Examples of animal foods permitted in Islam (halal) are lamb, goat, feet, chicken, fish, and eggs. All meat must come from herbivorous animals. All pork products are forbidden (haram) in the Muslim world. All types of alcohol are also banned. Carrion and blood are also prohibited (Wekke et al., 2018).

In dressing and modesty, Muslims have strict dressing codes. Islam shuns open or hidden obscenity. A typical Muslim woman is supposed to cover their faces with a headscarf (hijab) when in public. Some women fully cover their faces such that only the eyes and hands are visible. Their dressing code is characterized by long dresses that cover almost every part of their body. Muslim women are not allowed to be surrounded by male members of medical staff. A female member of the medical team should be present. Free mixing of sexes is highly prohibited in the Muslim world, and so is physical contact of opposite sexes except for couples.

Muslims also have unique death customs. A dying Muslim wishes to lie on their right side facing the holy city of Mecca. When a baby dies after four months of pregnancy, it should be given a name, washed, and buried in the usual manner. The dead body must be buried as quickly as possible, usually, the same day that the death happens or within 24hrs

after death. The body should first be washed, shrouded, and a prayer done following Islamic religious law. The body is buried facing Mecca. Cremation of the dead is forbidden, and so is postmortem.

Polygamy is allowed in Islam. A man can have a maximum of four wives following Chapter 4 of the Quran. Family planning is not welcome to orthodox Muslims. Muslims also practice circumcision rites. A Muslim boy should be circumcised as soon as possible after birth. Prayers are also conducted for the newborn baby.

Generally, Muslims regard high moral standards. In Islam, virtue is highly encouraged. Virtues such as generosity, patience, and love. These values are for the good of the individual and society.

Counseling strategies

Immigrant Muslim clients may find it challenging to adapt to the new culture in an alien world. They may find life in the unknown world unbearable because they are not in their typical setting. They may be unable to practice their usual practices and cultures. Most cultures are intolerant to Muslims. Muslim immigrants face an unwelcoming environment, especially in the USA and Europe. In 2017, former U.S. President Donald Trump deported many Muslim immigrants in the USA (Khan et al., 2019). Trump issued an executive order to restrict immigration from seven predominantly Muslim nations (Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Sudan). Islam religion is associated with terrorism, as seen by many terrorist groups in Muslim countries. Muslims face discrimination in the western world. Islamophobia is the exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Muslims, leading to discrimination, stereotypes, marginalization, exclusion, and bias toward Muslim immigrants. Islamophobia can cause psychological and emotional distress among Muslim immigrants (Berger R. & Berger J, 2019). These immigrants, therefore, require psychological counseling

to cope with the hostile environment. Muslims are concentrated in the Arabic world, where they are the majorities means that Muslims are minorities in all other regions of the world. Thus, Muslim immigrants may find it challenging to adapt to new environments with few or no members of their culture. Counseling is necessary so that such people remain psychologically intense and don't fall into depression.

The best counseling method for such people is collectivism. Individualism stresses individual goals and rights, while collectivism emphasizes personal relationships. Collectivism focuses on what is best for the collective group (Ali et al., 2020). In this case, Muslim immigrants in a particular country or environment. Collectivity plays a significant role in Muslim society despite their heavy emphasis on individual free will. Followers of Islam strictly follow Quranic principles that teach the importance of working together for the common good. Muslims are often urged to treat both Muslims and non-Muslims as members of the human community struggling to achieve a common goal. Therefore, when counseling Muslim immigrant clients, the concept of collectivism would be essential. This is because socialist Islamic values such as empathy and equity form a context of Muslim social order. In a new environment where people face different challenges, Collectivity is a perfect form of counseling. The collectivist principle believes that a group is an entity, more imperative than the sum of just individuals interacting together. Collective emphasizes that a group is more important than an individual. Any decision made is done on behalf of the whole group. It ensures people look out for each other and help in times of difficulties. When the Muslim immigrants can work together, they can support each other making life in a new environment more bearable and ensure that one is not highly affected by the hardships faced in a new environment. Collectivism gives people a sense of belonging and makes them feel that they are not alone. Besides, it is crucial for Muslims since their teachings insist that the ummah cannot exist if they do not incorporate Quranic education in their daily lives.

Another effective form of counseling is understanding the different models of various Islamic groups' cultural identity formation. Unlike Muslim groups have different sets of beliefs and principles, arbitrated by a central culture of origin and religion. Appreciation of an individual's uniqueness and a generalized knowledge about the person's culture makes it easier to interact with the individual in a new environment. When counseling Muslim immigrant clients, the counselor needs to know the person's culture. For many Muslim immigrants, living according to Islam's tenets and its recommended lifestyle in the western world proves to be an enormous challenge due to the separation in religious beliefs and state (Younis, & Hassan, 2018). While trying to integrate into the U.S. society, they usually experience a lot of stress that may even lead to psychological disorders. To deal with this, understanding their cultural identities often prove to be an excellent form of counseling. Once the counselor understands the cultural identity, they can conduct a culturally sensitive and relevant intervention that helps the client's specific needs. Besides, understanding a client's cultural identity allows for exploring his or her culture, sexual orientation, age, social class, and religion, among other things. It also gives an overview of the client's environment and the challenges they face in the new environment. This knowledge helps a counselor to deal with the particular needs of the clients.

Finally, acculturation is also another form of counseling that counselors can use on migrant Muslim clients. Acculturation can be defined as psychological and behavioral changes in a person as they interact with other people of a different culture (Abbas et al., 2018). The use of the acculturative style in counseling is an excellent contributor to good mental health as it involves the lowest level of stress. Besides, it helps in clarifying cultural identities in addition to the psychological state of the client. After understanding a client's acculturation orientation, the counselor can elucidate his or her modification to the host culture by bearing in mind the distance between the clients' conventions and values and the

mainstream of the host's culture. This information helps the counselor assist the clients in resolving the problems and conflicts they experience in the new environment. It also ensures that clients receive culturally receptive involvements.

Counseling interventions

When working with migrant Muslim clients, one of the critical things that we should consider is their different models of cultural identities. There are many different types of ⁵ Muslim immigrants in the United States, and each has different beliefs and values. Understanding the differences between specific Muslim groups in their environment and having general knowledge about their different world views is vital for effective practice. Once one understands their different worldviews, they can develop culturally applicable and sensitive interventions that ensure a proper working relationship. Also, one should comprehend the Muslim concept of mental health that states that all solutions to any issues that affect them exist in the Quran's revelations. The morals of Muslim immigrants mirror core Islamic principles explicit to mental health issues. To work effectively with Muslim clients, it is vital to understand their religious and cultural beliefs and incorporate them into the therapeutic process that guarantees healing.

Identity formation is another aspect that would be helpful when dealing with Muslim immigrant clients. The clients typically would go through the four stages of identify formation: assimilation, awareness, disengagement, and reengagement. During the assimilation stage, the immigrants are indoctrinated to believe in the dominant culture. However, most Muslims maintain their culture especially religion. When they are in western countries, these Muslims try to avoid abandoning their culture and taking the culture of the dominant community. During this stage, people experience hatred and loneliness. This may particularly affect the Muslim immigrants considering Muslims are very conservative. At this

stage, people lack awareness of the value of their ethnic group. The second stage is the questioning or awareness stage. This stage is characterized by personal, political, and social crisis. People start questioning their beliefs about themselves and start comparing what they have been taught with what they are currently experiencing. Muslim immigrants will definitely go through this stage. They will face discrimination, notice comments and behaviors directed to them that are offensive and hurtful. They may be confronted with racism in schools, workplaces, and places of worship that can trigger feelings of rejection and loneliness. The third stage is rejection or disengagement. Here, the clients are faced with the dilemma of choosing between rejecting their original culture and adopting the new culture. Muslim immigrants who have lived in foreign countries may be torn between which side to fall in. They may experience self-hatred and even depression. They may feel guilty and shameful of abandoning their own culture. As a counsellor, you need to address these feelings. The fourth and last stage is for people who have learned and discerned the aspects of the new culture and realized that they are not harmful as they thought before. They have been integrated into the new dominant culture and are not guilty about it.

Another critical variable ⁶ to consider when working with migrant Muslim clients is their acculturation levels based on their generation and migration. Four acculturation styles are relegation, assimilation, incorporation, and separation. The mental health changes are different according to which mode a client acculturates as each one comes with varying levels of stress (Stanton, 2020). Once a counselor understands a client's acculturation style, they can know the client's core beliefs and assumptions and come up with interventions that help resolve the issues affecting the client. Further, to work well with Muslim clients, it is important to know their identification with their culture, religion, race, and society. Understanding their identification level with their nationality is vital as it enables you to understand how strong or weak the attachment is. If the identification is robust, the cultural

struggles in therapeutic and social interactions increase. It is thus important for a counselor to know the level of title as it influences the client's morals and worldview. Understanding the client's worldview is significant in the development of a dynamic working environment.

Finally, it is essential to consider your physical appearance when working with a Muslim client. While working, you should try to find out whether the client has experienced things such as alienation, discrimination, and racism, among other things (Langroudi, & Skinta, 2019). Such adverse experiences often affect the client psychologically and emotionally and slow down how the patient adjusts to the new environment. To work with the client, the counselor must establish a good therapeutic relationship with the client by avoiding biases and assumptions about the immigrant and building trust.

Directions of future research

Among the existing gaps in cross-cultural counseling theory and practice related to migrant Islam, clients lack adequate knowledge concerning the different cultural identities, world view, and acculturation of various Islamic groups (Carlson et al., 2019). The assumptions of different councilors mainly cause this inadequacy. Some usually think that they have all the knowledge on counseling from all the books they have read. Others believe that their backgrounds or exposure to other cultures make them competent about multicultural issues; thus, they don't see the need for further research. Another gap is the lack of proper understanding of Islamic religion, including its principles, teachings, and values and the importance of the religion to the client. To develop better counseling strategies, we should research the different Muslim groups to understand their cultural practices better and know how the other groups view the world. Researchers should more studies on the Quran to know the various teachings, values, and principles that guide Muslims. Finally, councilors should seek to learn more concerning different cultural groups and avoid working on assumptions.

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