



Multicultural Competence in the Age of Islamophobia: A Faith-Based Mental Health Perspective Integrating Islam and Counseling Theory

A Review of

Islamic Counselling: An Introduction to Theory and Practice

by G. Hussein Rassool

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Overview and Strengths

Islamic Counselling: An Introduction to Theory and Practice by G. Hussein Rassool successfully differentiates Islamic counseling theory from a wide range of mainstream therapeutic models such as psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, and solution-focused approaches. It serves as an introductory guide to support academics, clinicians, paraprofessionals, and students in the understanding of and in the proper care of the Muslim population in the West. The title indicates coverage of both theory and practice, but the author's focus is somewhat more theoretical. Special populations and issues are discussed in several chapters (e.g., premarital/marital counseling, addictions, alcohol problems, the role of imams [Islamic preachers/chaplains], assessment, and Islamic counseling ethics).

Islamic Counselling is well organized and comprehensive, and it provides considerable theoretical integration. The book is well structured, with the first chapter providing an excellent factual introduction to the Muslim faith. A strong feature of the book is that each of the 19 chapters is strong enough to stand on its own with a clear introduction, body, conclusion, and references. The references are comprehensive with links to journal articles, books, and websites that serve as springboards to relevant research.

The book offers excellent integrative analyses of Islamic counseling with a large range of mainstream counseling approaches and problems. Chapter 15 describing the Islamic counseling practice model is the most innovative chapter. It provides both an overview of

existing models in Islamic counseling and proposes a new model of Islamic counseling, integrating an adaptation based on Barise's (2005) social work practice model.

The proposed 11-stage model, which utilizes both nondirective and directive techniques, has the following stages: awakening and intention, consultation, contemplation, guidance seeking, willful decision, goal-and-route vision, absolute trust in God, action, help seeking, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. The author acknowledges that his model "is not claimed to be comprehensive, but provides an outline for further development and refinement" (p. 219).

Islamic Counselling provides both breadth and depth of coverage. The last chapter addresses multicultural counseling. The author identifies several challenges that counselors working with Muslims may confront, such as Islamophobia (both latent and overt), ethical issues, therapeutic alliance and trust, communication styles, and recognition of clinical differences in Muslim clients. Rassool argues that providing culturally competent counseling is both an ethical and professional requirement.

The author appears highly knowledgeable about spiritual issues and frequently refers to religious sources, rather than writing about religious psychotherapy without a strong grounding in both religion and psychotherapy. The traditional approach to Islam observed by the majority of Muslims (i.e., *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah*) was well described. In the existing literature, there is an overrepresentation of contributions from adherents of esoteric traditions in Islam (e.g., Sufism); however, the majority of Muslims worldwide—and therefore Muslims under therapeutic care—are more likely to follow traditional approaches. The book will be helpful in counseling Muslims from a variety of sects/belief traditions.

Islamic Counselling is likely to garner wide appeal. It can be strongly recommended as a main textbook for an undergraduate/graduate Islamic counseling course and as an excellent supplemental textbook for a multicultural counseling/psychology course. The chapters themselves are very well suited for assigned reading across various undergraduate/graduate courses, addressing the need to bring diversity into teachings.

Each chapter first reviews the topic with a strong theoretical background before adding the lens of Islamic counseling; thus, this book is an excellent choice for those interested in simply learning more about counseling or psychotherapy theories.

Islamic Counselling is also pertinent for audiences outside of academia. Paraprofessionals or peer navigators/peer support specialists will benefit from reading the book. Life coaches may also find it a valuable resource, as would Muslim imams. The book may also assist community organizations training health care professionals on the holistic care of Muslim patients or professionals offering diversity training.

Areas for Expansion

There remain areas for the book to expand upon, and a follow-up book(s) is/are recommended along with continued interdisciplinary work in the area.

Section 1 of the book covers Context and Background, and Section 2 covers Assessment, Models, and Intervention Strategies. There is room for expansion and greater depth within Section 2. The author in the preface describes the book as a "preliminary mapping exercise"

(p. xi) that he hopes will stimulate further examination/development. The author concludes the book with the recognition that "if education and training in Islamic counselling are to become a reality, Muslim scholars and clinicians need to focus on an effective strategy in order to meet the needs of Muslim patients in a multicultural society" (p. 266).

Despite the title's emphasis on practice and theory, this work is a strong theory-based book most relevant for introducing topic areas rather than for providing in-depth guidance for advanced clinical practice. The book met the stated aim of encompassing both current theory and research as well as creating awareness of the practice implications in delivering appropriate and effective counseling interventions with Muslims. However, it would have been tremendously helpful if the author had included case studies that illustrate the Islamic counseling model in practice.

The reviewers hope the author will follow up with a more skill-based book and a workbook with added practical guidance. The chapter on addictions (the author's expertise area) was stronger in this regard in giving types of questions to ask, and other chapters had additional tips; however, this book is not an advanced treatment manual resource.

Furthermore, although the author clearly acknowledges the diverse composition and immigrant-to-indigenous ratio of Muslim populations, the book focuses on Muslims in the West, viewing Muslims as a group of people with a distinct culture within a host culture.

Muslims are increasingly Western-born converts to Islam or born in the West themselves. Also, Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries comprise the largest group of Muslims. These groups may have differing attitudes and counseling needs as the author himself suggests. It is helpful to consider such nuances in greater depth when discussing the general tendencies of Muslim clients. For example, the statement that "Muslim clients tend to demonstrate passivity in the presence of a professional figure" (p. 106) could be elaborated. However, describing the diversity of cultures in greater depth is admittedly challenging in a single book, already 304 pages in length.

Although there was a discussion of the interaction and difference of religion and culture as well as statements about the diversity of Muslims, the "collectivistic nature" of Muslim clients is somewhat overemphasized. Given the diversity of Muslims, professionals with less experience may respond by overinvolving the family, rather than first evaluating the unique case and presenting issues.

Given global changes, such as urbanization and modernization, some writers have argued many people are moving toward a more individualistic and autonomous perspective worldwide, whereas other writers have noted the theoretical potential for one's sense of self and connection to others to be simultaneously autonomous and related. The work of Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı on the autonomous-related perspective and her theory of family change (see Kağıtçıbaşı, 2002, 2005) is relevant here. In future work and theorizing, recognizing the complexity of understanding individualism–collectivism and one's sense of self and family from a counseling and clinical perspective in Muslim populations would be valuable.

Moving Forward

The author successfully advocates for Muslims in the West, whose numbers are increasing and who are often underresearched, underrepresented, stigmatized, and a persecuted community (see Amer & Bagasra, 2013). In a recent statement by the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association (2015), it was recognized that

psychologists are challenged to acknowledge the impact of the post-9/11 climate of fear, bias and discrimination facing our Muslim colleagues, students, clients and communities . . . it is time to support our Muslim colleagues, counter misinformation and sweeping generalizations . . . and address fear by supporting resilience and nurturing connection and community. (para. 4)

This book moves us forward in meeting this call. It can help non-Muslim academicians, clinicians, and students gain knowledge that may support resolving biases through their own self-awareness and knowledge of the other, while supporting the development of competence required for effective service delivery in multicultural settings. Moreover, for Muslims, the book serves as a rare source critically evaluating and integrating spirituality and mainstream approaches, moving beyond a primarily Eurocentric counseling view from which the majority of Muslim and non-Muslim counselors were trained.

The book expands upon previous research suggesting the benefits of utilizing a spiritual treatment approach with Muslims (e.g., Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013), and it complements another book, edited by Ahmed and Amer (2011), *Counseling Muslims: Handbook of Mental Health Issues and Interventions*.

The next stage of scholarship for the assessment and psychotherapeutic treatment of Muslims would be greater collaboration between religious scholars, academics, and clinicians to develop in-depth treatment manuals for an advanced readership. In addition, treatment evaluation research is needed to develop evidence-based practice guidelines in Muslim populations.

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Islamophobia: A Faith-Based Mental. Health Perspective Integrating Islam. and Counseling Theory. A Review of. The central role that Islam plays in the lives of adherent Muslims throughout the world calls for more spiritually oriented methods of approaching psychological treatment with this group. This article explores the psychology of Islam with respect to human behavior, pathology, health, and spirituality. A general therapeutic framework of psychological intervention within an Islamic context is offered. Within the model, practical interventions are suggested that are consistent with the Islamic views of the varying elements of the human being. Department of Psychology and Counseling. Despite the considerable contemporary mental health related challenges Muslims face, many opt not to seek psychotherapy services due to concerns that mainstream therapists do not provide treatment within a religious or spiritual context (Amri & Bemak, 2013; Killawi, Daneshpour, Elmi, Dadras, & Hamid, 2014). General Trends in the Literature on Integrating Spirituality and Religion in Psychotherapy. During the last few decades, a significant amount of attention has been given to the role of religion and spirituality in clinical practice. Professionals, researchers, and academicians have contributed to the literature indicating further progress (Richards et al., 2015). This progress can be summarized in the following manner