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Abstract

Social work knowledge and skills are socially constructed. Professional social work was initiated in the Western world in the early twentieth century on the basis of a secular, euro-centric worldview (Graham, 2002, 2005). Thus, social work is shaped by the European and North American (hereafter the West) socio-cultural contexts in which it originates (Payne, 1997). However, multicultural sensitivity has been a value held by the social work profession for decades (e.g., Latting, 1990). Additionally, as professional social work is internationalised, its indigenisation has been gaining more acceptance lately world wide (Hokenstad, Khinduka, & Midgley, 1992; Hokenstad, Midgley, 1997). As well, as more and more models of social work emphasize the importance of understanding clients' worldview for effective social work, integration of spirituality in social work is increasingly being called for. As Van Hook, Huguen, and Aguirra put it, "as wholistic, empowerment-focused, and culturally appropriate approaches to social work practice become more widely adopted, the ability to integrate spirituality and religion into practice will become a critical professional skill." (2001, p. 3). However, since Islam is a complete way of life, spirituality is viewed in Islam as uniquely comprehensive (e.g., Abdalati, 1986; Barise & France, 2004; Haneef, 1999; Lahkim, Barise, & Boukhobza, 2004; Zaid & Barise, 2004).

Social Work with Muslims: Insights from the Teachings of Islam

Similarly, arguments have been made for localization of social work within Muslim contexts (Ragab, 1995; Hakim Sarker & Ahmadullah, 1995), particularly within the past couple of decades. Efforts have also been made to link specific aspects of Islamic teachings to social work (Al

specific aspects of Islamic teachings to social work (Al-Dabbagh, 1993; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Azmi, 1991; Barise, 2003a; Barise, 2003b; Barise & France, 2004; Hakim Sarker & Ahmadullah, 1995; Haynes, Eweisi, Mageed, & Chung, 1997; Ragab, 1995; Turner, Cheboud, Lopez, & Barise, 2002). While this worldwide literature on Islamic indigenisation of social work remains limited both in number and scope (See Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003a), even less has been written about localization of social work practice within the context of Muslims in North America (Nadir & Dziegielewski, 2001; Rehman & Dziegielewski, 2003) and Canada in particular (e.g., Barise & France, 2004). As Al-Krenawi and Graham put it “This research also lead us to identify the need for more comprehensive work on Islam, as we found that most Muslim clients constructed problems and their solutions with strong reference to religion” (2003a, p. 79). Therefore, there is a dire need to localize mainstream social work methods to respond more appropriately to the local context of the Muslim community in Canada and elsewhere.

But what does indigenisation or localization of social work involve? In this paper, I conceptualise indigenisation of social work as involving dynamic, integrative, and primarily bottom-up processes. Thus, indigenisation or localization of social work refers to the process of mainly developing social work approaches rooted in the local context, but also adjusting mainstream social work to fit the local context. In other words, the two approaches should be integrated, but ideally more emphasis should be given to developing locally anchored methods (See also Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003a). In this paper, I make an attempt to integrate social work methods and Islamic problem solving and human growth practices. I conceptualise Islamically indigenised social work to involve supporting methodically an individual, a group, or a community to meet a lawful need or solve a problem with means permissible in Islam (Barise, 2004b). This includes the human need for growth and development. In fact, since Muslims are of diverse backgrounds, the social work localization that I focus on here is still partial. It deals only with the Islamic teachings aspect, which Muslims

share. To achieve more complete localization, other factors such as race and culture must be integrated. Islam is a dynamic religion that adapts to, and integrates with a variety of localities, to develop new localities. Islam adapts to these settings due to qualities inherent in it, including: emphasis on reason, practicality (Qur'an, 2:286), compatibility with the "human nature" or fitrah, and universality.

The primary purpose of this paper is to discuss ways in which the teachings of Islam might inform social work with Canadian Muslims. In the first section, the socio-cultural context of the Canadian Muslim community is described concisely. The second section discusses this author's understanding of the fundamentals of Islamic worldview and their commensurate implications for social work with Muslims. In the third section, basic social work-related concepts are compared and contrasted with this previously identified understanding of the teachings of Islam. Finally, an original Islam-based social work practice model will be proposed. The model is proposed for clients who believe in and want to practice Islam. Social workers must be aware of the different levels of religiosity and acculturation within the Muslim community. It goes without saying that non-Muslim social workers could use this model with their Muslim clients, if both choose to. The model is there for clients and social workers that decide to use it, in whatever way that might fit their needs. It is unethical though to force the proposed model on those who do not believe in it, just as it is unethical to force Western social work methods on the clients who do not believe in them.

This article is intended to add to the multicultural and anti-oppressive social work literature in Canada (e.g., Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003b; Barise, 1998; Boucher, 1990; Herberg, 1993; Li, 1990; Mullaly, 2002; Sanders, 1980), rather than replacing it. In fact, to benefit appropriately from the proposed model, I consider familiarity with the principles of multicultural social work as essential. Social workers should still be aware of the different cultures as well as levels of acculturation and religiosity within the Muslim community. They should still appreciate the

potentially different experiences of racial, gender, and age groups as well as individuals. They still need to be able to use competently their attitudes, knowledge, relationship, and skills to work effectively with persons from cultural backgrounds different than their own (Barise, 1998).

I primarily base my discussions of Islamic teachings on my understanding of the Qur'an and authentic Hadith (the validated traditions of Prophet Mohammad), which Muslims recognize as the original sources of revealed knowledge. It is important to note that, although Islam is universal, the original texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith are in Arabic. In the case of the Qur'an in particular, only the actual Arabic text can be called the "Qur'an".

Therefore, quotations of verses from translations of the Qur'an refer to the "meaning of the Qur'an", rather than the actual Qur'an. Since meaning can be lost through translation, key terminologies are provided, in this article, alongside their translation. I also build on my understanding of the excellent works of reputable early Muslim scholars and counsellors such as Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111AD) and Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350AD).

Canadian Muslims: Socio-Cultural Context

Islam is Canada's fastest-growing religion and Muslims are Canada's second largest religious group (after Christianity). Numbers from the 2001 Canadian census show that the Muslim community increased by 128.9 per cent to 579,640 in the 1991-2001 decade (Globe and Mail, May 14, 2003). With the same rate of increase, the number of Muslims in Canada totals approximately 850,622 in the year 2005.

The Muslim community in Canada is "a mosaic rainbow community" composed of both new immigrants and many citizens who are born in Canada. Members of the Muslim community in Canada represent more than sixty ethnic groups including Europeans, Hispanics, Canadian First Nations, and African-Americans (Barise & France, 2004). Many Muslims in Canada have originally come from a

variety of different countries including Morocco, Somalia, Bosnia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan, France, Turkey, Germany, UK, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Guyana, to name a few (Barise & France, 2004). As the Qur'an clearly teaches, diversity in terms of gender, nation, colour, language, and tribe is to be valued as the signs of God: "O mankind, verily. We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most pious" (Qur'an 49:13). "And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours; most surely there are signs in this for the learned" (Qur'an 30:22).

Social workers must understand the importance of the family and community among Muslims (e.g., Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003a; Barise, 2003a; Carlson, Barise, & Wooldrige, 2005; Sani & Barise, 2003). Islamic teachings balance the individual to the group in terms of responsibility, accountability, and meeting of needs. According to Islamic precepts, just like the body, the viability of any Muslim community depends on the mutual interdependence between its different members. Just as no single part of the body can work for itself unaided, no one individual or group can achieve goals without drawing upon the rest of the community as a unified entity. As narrated by No'man bin Bashir, the prophet (Peace be upon him) said: "Mutual love, tenderness, and compassion among the believers work like a human body. When one part becomes sick the whole body gets weak due to sleeplessness and fever" (Bukhari & Muslim).

Thus, the role of the family in Islam goes beyond reproduction to the provision of a healthy environment based upon unity, love, harmony, tranquility, happiness, compassion, and equality in the sight of God.

Social workers need to be aware of the various challenges that the Muslim community in Canada is facing. The Islamic values of family ties, community support, and spiritual-based methods of solving social problems are

waning with today's modern life (Barise, 2003a). The extended family is shrinking and the number of nuclear families with a smaller number of children is rising (Barise & France, 2004). This means that the support that Muslims used to receive from their extended family members is diminishing. The decline in the number of siblings, the absence of grandparents and the immediate kin, as social support, might lead to isolation and social problems.

In my view, Islam is a source of strength for Canadian Muslims and a factor that balances cultural traditions and modern influences. Muslims in Canada are increasingly turning to Islam not only to cope with the hardships of modern life, but also as a source of flexibility-in-strength to adapt to the rapid changes they are experiencing without losing their identity. Thus, it is possible that many Canadian Muslims could respond more positively to an Islamic-based social work approach as compared to the mainstream social work methods (e.g., Compton & Galaway, 1999; Germain, & Gitterman, 1996; Shulman, 1999), which they might consider foreign to them. For any social work approach to be successful, cooperation between the client and the social worker is essential. However, for many clients of faith, to cooperate with the social worker, the social work approach must not be in contradiction with the client's belief system. Hence, my rationale for, social work practice to draw upon the teachings of Islam, in order to promote successful intervention with practising members of the Canadian Muslim community.

To many devout Muslims, worldviews dominant in mainstream social work are often incongruent with followers' understanding of Islamic worldviews. However, the diversity within the Muslim community in terms of cultural traditions, levels of religiousness, and levels of adaptation into the Canadian context, must be understood. Simplistic generalizations about ethnic groups could lead to stereotyping.

Islamic Worldview

A coherent worldview based on Tauheed (Islamic

A coherent worldview based on Tawheed (Islamic monotheism) guide Muslims; therefore, to effectively help Muslims, social workers must understand their worldview (Barise & France, 2004). Discussed in this section are the author's understanding of two aspects of an Islamic worldview: 1) pillars of faith and ritual practice and 2) Islamic epistemology, ontology, and cosmology.

Pillars of Faith (Iman) and Ritual Practice

As included in most introductory books about Islam (e.g., Abdalati, 1986; Haneef, 1999), there are six pillars of faith that delineate how a Muslim views existence.

1. Belief in God (the Arabic name, Allah, is one of the 99 names of God) as the only One Creator and Sustainer of all beings.
2. Belief in and reverence of the angels as unseen creatures that, unlike humans, never disobey God.
3. Belief in all of the revealed scriptures of God including the original Tawrat (the book revealed to Prophet Moses), and the original Injil (the book revealed to Prophet Jesus).
4. Belief in and reverence of all Prophets of God from Adam to Mohammad (peace be upon them), without discriminating among them.
5. Belief in the Hereafter when all humans will return back to God for the results of their deeds in this world.
6. Belief in the human freewill as well as the fact that nothing can happen without God's permission.

As well, five pillars of ritual practice regulate Muslim's lives and unify the Muslim community. These five pillars help the Muslim to develop a good and moral existence.

1. Declaration of faith (shahadah): This is the belief that must be declared, "that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad (peace be upon him) is the Prophet of Allah". In other words, the Muslim gets into covenant with God that she/he would worship God alone and would follow Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) as the model for this monotheistic complete way for life. When put into practice, this declaration frees the

Muslim from conflicting loyalties, superstition, egocentricity, and different forms of subordinations and addictions.

2. Prayers (Salat): The rituals of prayer are to be performed five times a day facing the Holy Ka'abah (the first Mosque built on earth) in Makkah (Mecca). By performing such frequent prayers sincerely, one maintains God-consciousness and discipline. These prayers can be performed individually or communally in any clean place. However, communal prayers are preferred and even obligatory for those who are in the vicinity and able to attend. Communal prayers promote equality, brotherhood/sisterhood, and a strong sense of community;

3. Zakat (self and property purification): Muslims are required to pay a fixed proportion of their possessions for the welfare of the whole community, and the poor in particular;

4. Fasting (Sawm): During the month of Ramadhan (when the Quran was revealed), all adult, able Muslims must abstain from all food, drink and sexual activity from dawn to dusk. Fasting promotes God-consciousness, spiritual growth, self-purification, patience, self-restraint, flexibility, generosity, sympathy for the poor, communal solidarity, and healthy lifestyle (Abdalati, 1986; Haneef, 1999).

5. Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj): At least once in life, all adult, able Muslims should make pilgrimage to Makkah. Muslims from around the world (nowadays more than a couple of millions) converge annually in Makkah to perform the Hajj at the same time.

The above pillars of Islamic faith and ritual practice have important implications for social work with Muslims (See Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).

Islamic Worldview: Epistemology, Ontology, and Cosmology

To understand social work from an Islamic perspective, one has to be familiar with the fundamentals of Islamic

epistemology (See Figure 1). Epistemology partly deals with the question: what is the nature of knowledge? In my view of Islamic epistemology, there are two domains of knowledge: revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge (Bokhoubza, Barise, & Lahkim, 2003; Golshani, 1989; Mir, 1999). Acquired knowledge can also be termed environmental knowledge. God is the ultimate source of both types of knowledge. The Qur'an and the authentic traditions of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) are the source of revealed knowledge, while the human intellect interacts with God's creation (the environment) to develop acquired knowledge. In other words, the source of revealed knowledge is God's word and inspiration, while the source of acquired knowledge is God's creation. Essentially, from an Islamic perspective, revealed and acquired knowledge are integrated into a unified knowledge: 'ilm. One of the expressions of monotheism is that knowledge is unified and comes from the only One existing God. Thus, monotheism integrates scientific knowledge with revealed knowledge into a unified whole (Bakar, 1990). Muslim clients and social workers may draw upon both types of knowledge to meet needs or solve problems.

Both revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge could be either Qad'i (certain) or Thanni (speculative) (e.g., Al-'Alwani, 1990; Khallaf, 1981; Bokhoubza et al., 2003). I am inclined to think that there is never a contradiction between certain revealed knowledge and certain acquired knowledge (e.g., Bokhoubza et al., 2003). In other words, of course, facts about God's words and His creation would never contradict. However, due to the fallibility of the human intellect, it is conceivable that speculatively interpreted revealed knowledge and speculatively acquired knowledge contradict each another. In that case, Muslim help seekers would often opt for the speculative revealed knowledge.

Understanding the principles of Islamic ontology is also essential for the Muslim client or a social worker that wants to operate within an Islamic framework. Ontology deals with the question: what is the nature of reality? In my

deals with the question: what is the nature of reality? In my understanding of Islamic ontology, there are two domains of reality: Shahadah or the seen reality (knowable through senses) and Gayb or the unseen reality (unknowable through senses). The seen reality is knowable through acquired knowledge, while the only source of unseen reality is revealed knowledge. Human intellect interacts with acquired knowledge and revealed knowledge to construct integrated knowledge (see Barise, 2003). In fact, from my understanding of the Qur'anic perspective, reality and knowledge are not separated (Mir, 1999). The Qur'an makes it clear that God is the ultimate source of both types of knowledge and reality:

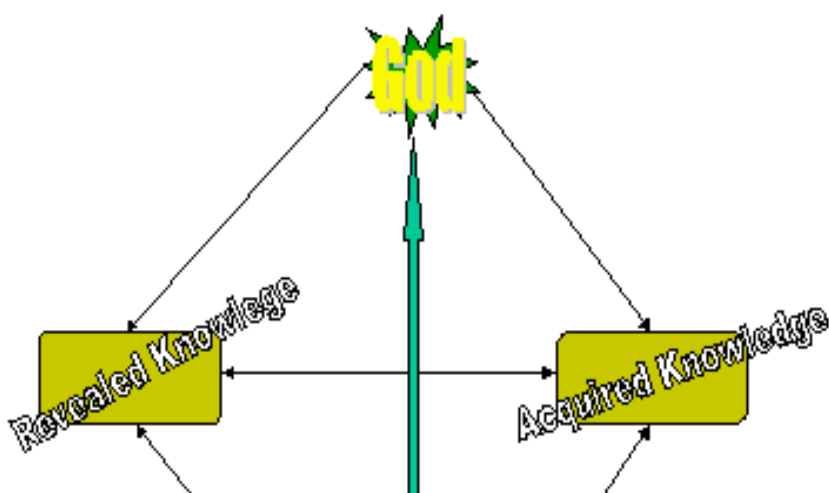
“He is God besides Whom there is no god; the Knower of the unseen (Gayb) and the seen (Shahadah); He is the Beneficent, the Merciful (59:22). The Knower of the unseen (Gayb)! So He does not reveal His secrets to any. Except to him whom He chooses as a messenger (72:26-27).”

The forgoing discussion necessitates a unique conception of human ecology broader than the secular one often advocated for in mainstream social work (e.g., Compton & Galaway, 1999; Germain, & Gitterman, 1996). My understanding of Islam has the following ramifications. The human environment includes both the seen and the unseen creatures such as jinn and the angels. From Islamic perspective, all creatures exist in compliance with God's will. All creatures, from the tiny atoms to the mighty galaxies, worship God and thus co-exist harmoniously according to God's will and laws. When one accepts Islam, one becomes part of this harmonious co-existence willingly. Being a Muslim thus necessitates revolving on an assigned course (just like the electrons and celestial bodies do) without transgressing boundaries and infringing on the rights of the self, the other creatures (environment), and God. Through this pious life the Muslim strives for an all-encompassing peace, which is a fundamental concept in Islam. The term Muslim means peaceful. One of God's names is Assalam, which means peace. Both the concluding words of Muslims' daily prayers and their greetings are Assalamu alaikum which means (peace be

greetings are *Assalamu aleikum* which means 'peace be upon you.'—Said at least 17 times in daily prayers. Heaven in Islam is called Darussalam, which means the abode of peace (See Turner, Cheboud, Lopez, & Barise, 2002).

Thus, in my view, social work from an Islamic perspective would help the client gain total emancipation from all forms of subordination except God's. Social work would help the Muslim client meet his/her lawful needs and gain internal and external harmony, synchronicity, and peace. Internal peace refers to one's psychological well-being due to lack of conflict within the self, while external peace stems from the harmonious and peaceful relationship with God and the spiritual, physical, and social environment. In the Islamic view of the purpose of life, peaceful existence in this life would lead to eternal peace in the hereafter.

According to my understanding of Islamic precepts, while God is the ultimate Helper, Satan is the biggest anti-helper. In other words, God and whatever environmental forces He facilitates, support the social worker-client dyad in their effort to achieve positive changes (See Figure One below). On the other hand, Satan and whatever other environmental forces he influences do not only attempt to hinder these positive changes, but they also encourage the creation of new problems. Satan capitalizes on such human weaknesses as inertia, lassitude, procrastination, desire for immediate gratification, tendency to forget, to name a few. He uses a multiplicity of lures and deceits to achieve his goal. However, those who are empowered by drawing upon God's power and knowledge cannot be affected by Satan's feeble tricks.



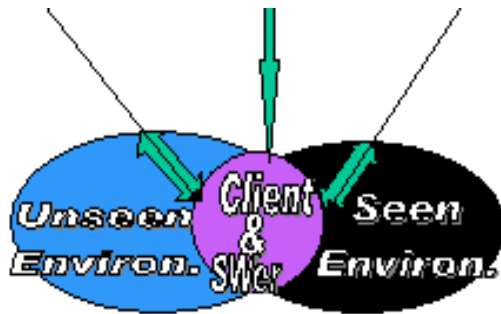


Figure 1: Client & Social Worker in an Islamic Worldview

Additional Key Social Work Concepts and Islamic Teachings

There is striking similarity between the teachings of Islam and core social work values including upholding human dignity, social justice, helping the needy, and integrity. As well, the main principles of anti-oppressive social work (Mullaly, 2002) are highly congruent with Islamic teachings (Turner, Cheboud, Lopez, & Barise, 2002). However, mainstream social work and Islamic teachings differ considerably in relation to various key concepts.

First, as stated earlier, the uniquely comprehensive view of spirituality in Islam is significantly different from the dominant viewpoint in mainstream social work (See Van Hook et al., 2001). Spirituality in Islam goes beyond being just another dimension of human needs. Islam provides guidance on meeting the spiritual, physical, cognitive, psychological and social needs (Barise, 2004b). Thus, spirituality underlies all other dimensions of human needs that are interrelated. Therefore, social workers need to understand Islam as a way of life, not just as a religion.

Second, mainstream social work and teachings of Islam differ considerably in relation to the concept of helping. Contrary to the dominant approach in social work, in my understanding of Islam, God is the ultimate source of help, although this help comes through the environment.

Therefore, a Muslim would seek help from God and

In hereiore, a muslim would seek help from God and perceive any help from someone as coming from God. Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) advised Abdullah Bin 'Abbas "Be mindful of God, and God will protect you. Be mindful of God, and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of God; if you seek help, seek help of God" (Al-Tirmidhi).

In my view: Muslims subsequently have the obligation to thank God first and those who help them second. Independence and trust in God are important in Islam. However, Islam does not prohibit seeking help from other people, as far as there is a need and the help-seeker would see God as the ultimate source of help and helpers as means only. During daily prayers, Muslims say to God "We worship You and we seek help from You, guide us to the straight path." (Haneef, 1999).

Another difference, as I understand it, between the Islamic perspective and the secular approaches to social work lies in the beliefs about the nature of human needs. As stated earlier, from Islamic perspective, the human spiritual dimension is not only independent, but it also underlies all other human needs. According to Islamic jurisprudence, human needs fall into the following hierarchy: Daruriat (essentials), Hajiyyat (desirables), and Kamaliyat (luxuries) (e.g., Al-khallaf, 1981). However, social workers must realize that the importance of a specific need is largely based on the client's perspective.

Yet another area of divergence between mainstream social work approaches and my understanding of the teaching of Islam is how problems are interpreted, prevented, and solved. Anyone can face hardships, but Islam allows practicing Muslim clients to perceive and respond to problems through the teachings of Islam and by seeking God's help. Practicing Muslim clients see hardships as an opportunity for growth. Teachings of Islam encourage them to be confident that, if they persevere and use all permissible means to solve a problem, they would not only come out of any suffering stronger but also their shortcomings would be forgiven. practicing Muslims approach life in a win-win manner. The Prophetic saying

approach me in a win-win manner. The Prophetic saying below makes this point clear.

“Indeed amazing are the affairs of a believer! They are all for his benefit; If he is granted ease of living he is thankful; and this is best for him. And if he is afflicted with a hardship, he perseveres; and this is best for him. (Muslim)”

In my view, Islam-based social work would be strengths-based. The strengths perspective emphasizes the power of human beings to overcome adversity (Saleebey, 1997). The strength of the Islamic identity lies in how the values that are embodied in the teachings of Islam guide daily life (Barise & France, 2004). Flexibility is an essential characteristic and strength of a practicing Muslim on which social workers can build. Flexibility relates to coping effectively with stress and solving problems adaptively. As depicted in the Hadith below, practicing Muslims can overcome hardships and easily adapt to change without compromising their identity, integrity, and healthy Islamic functioning. Abu Huraira and Ka’ab Bin Malik reported that the Prophet said:

“The parable of a believer is that of a fresh and moist plant; the wind tilts it this way and that way; and so is the believer; he continues to be subject to affliction. And the parable of a hypocrite is that of a firm cedar tree; it does not shake - until it is uprooted all at once. (Bukhari and Muslim)”

Towards an Islamic Social Work Practice Model

The model proposed below integrates social work processes with my understanding of an Islamic worldview as well as conceptions of helping, problem solving, and change. The specific Islamic concepts used in the proposed model have been gleaned from my reading of, and experience with, the Qur’an and authentic Hadith. The concepts selected for inclusion in the proposed model are awakening (Qawmah), consultation (Istisharah), contemplation (Tafakkur), guidance-seeking (Istikharah), goal and route vision (Basirah), wilful decision (’Azm),

putting trust in God (Tawakkul), engaging in good deeds ('Amal), self-evaluation (Musabah), self-monitoring (Muraqabah), and seeking God's assistance (Isti'anah). My understanding of these concepts are elaborated in the Assessment to Evaluation sections below. Although these concepts are part of the practicing Muslims' daily life, for some, they may be practiced separately, without following any particular order in their application. As well, one must stress that these are not the only Islamic concepts relevant to social work processes. Early Muslim scholars and counsellors such as Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah used these and many other Islamic concepts to facilitate self-purification and spiritual growth (Badri, 2002). Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali employed these and many other concepts in his powerful book *Ihya Ulum Aldin* (revival of religious sciences). One of the most widely circulated summaries of Alghazali's classical book is *Mukhtasr Minhaj Al-Qasidin* (Summary of the Way of the Seekers) (Al-Maqdisi, 1995). Likewise, Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah discussed 66 Islamic concepts for self-purification in his influential book, *Madarij al-salikin* (Stages of Travellers) (Al-Jawziyyah, n.d.). I have selected 11 of these concepts to develop a problem-solving methodology to meet not only "spiritual needs", but other human needs as well. I organize the concepts into problem-solving format then extrapolate their use in a social work context. At least two deep-rooted Islamic precepts allow me to articulate these concepts in terms of conventional social work problem-solving processes for the first time. First, as discussed earlier, my understanding of spirituality in Islam entails all aspects of human life. Therefore, these concepts can be used for problem solving or transformation related to psychological, cognitive, social, or biological needs. Second, helping one another and collaboration on solving problems and meeting lawful needs are, in my view, well-established Islamic teachings. Before discussing the proposed social work practice model, a brief discussion of relationship building strategies based on Prophet Mohammad's (peace be upon him) non-verbal behaviours is provided below.

Relationship Building

Relationship Building

As discussed in most introductory social work texts, relationship building is fundamental for successful social work (e.g., Compton & Galaway, 1999; Shulman, 1999). The following paragraphs elaborate how, in my view, Muslim clients would probably respond better to any relationship based on what I understand to be such Islamic virtues as equality, empathy, honesty, and fairness. Fortunately, these are also among the core social work values. Muslims believe that Islamic virtues are embodied in Prophet Mohammad's (peace be upon him) lifestyle, which is considered Qur'an-in-action. Thus, the Prophet's life grounds the teachings of Islam as an easy model to emulate. Discussed here are my understanding of some of the attending non-verbal behaviours that the Prophet used to show when interacting with people (e.g., Alghazali, 1991). The Prophet used to receive people warmly, welcome them, and let them be comfortably seated. After he shakes hands, the Prophet never used to draw away his hand from the other person's hand till the latter drew away his hand. Most of the time, the Prophet used to face completely the person he was talking. This behaviour would show the person he was interacting with involvement, interest, and attentive listening. He never used to turn away his face from the person till the latter turned away his face. The Prophet was calm, approachable, and an attentive listener. Any person used to hold the Prophet's hand and take him wherever he wanted. In the meetings, he was never seen squatting in such a way that his knees protruded further than others. The Prophet's seating behaviour conveyed humility and respect for others. He used to smile almost always in the face of others (Alghazali, 1991). The Prophet's companions loved him more than they loved their children (Alghazali, 1991). Prophet Mohammad's (peace be upon him) above-mentioned attending behaviours are highly congruent with non-verbal behaviours, which are among the major ingredients of social work practice skills (e.g., Egan, 2002; Shulman, 1999).

Assessment

As shown in Figure 2, Qawmah, which means awakening or becoming conscious, is the first stage of the Islamic social work model. This section analyses my understanding of Qawmah, which refers to the client becoming aware of the need for change and the problem that must be solved. The client remembers all the bounties of God and what he is missing in the status quo. S/he realizes that he can change and God will help him in the process, and becomes aware of God's compassion and almighty power and that, with God's help, s/he can get rid of any entrapment in pessimism and lassitude. Qawmah is often what brings the client to the social worker seeking help. However, the social worker might help, for example, in raising further the consciousness of a client who recognizes the existence of the problem but is still in denial of its seriousness. In his book, *Madarij al-Salikin*, Ibn Qayyim states that one of the signs of Qawmah is sensitivity to the passage of time as the person realizes that there is no time to waste anymore. A resolution to change habits or negative environment is the result of Qawmah and the client starts his transformation journey.

“Say: I exhort you unto one thing only: that ye awake, for God's sake, by twos and singly, and then reflect.”

(Qur'an, 34:46)

Istisharah consultation is the second step in my understanding of an Islamic social work problem solving process. As the client becomes aware of the necessity of meeting a need or solving a problem, the social worker and the client start collaborating on collecting relevant data. They both consult all appropriate sources of information, starting with the client. The collected information can be from the environmental or revealed sources. The Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said that whoever consults with others would not regret later. The following are relevant verses from the Qu'an:

“So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them in affairs” (Qur'an, 3:159).

“And those who respond to their Lord and establish

And those who respond to their Lord and consultation; and who spend out of what We have given them” (Qur’an, 42:38).

Following the collection of relevant data, the social worker and the client engage in Tafakkur, which is often translated as contemplation (Badri, 1987) or reflection. The term Tafakkur is being used here to mean broader thinking processes which entail both contemplation and reflection. The social worker helps the client to make meaning of the data, analyse the problems, set realistic goals, and tentatively identify appropriate action strategies. However, Tafakkur goes beyond the analysis and planning aspects to include the client reflecting upon God’s creation and uncountable bounties to sharpen his vision and spiritually strengthen his motivation. We must note that Tafakkur is a fundamental, pervasive process that runs through all of the stages of Islamic social work model.

In defining and identifying problems, if the primary and the secondary problems are of psychological, cognitive, social, or biological nature, the original problem is often of a spiritual nature. However, as discussed earlier, all psychological, cognitive, social, or biological problems have an underlying spiritual dimension.

Intervention Plan

The following paragraphs outline my understanding of an intervention plan that could arise among devout, Muslim clients. In it, the client prays Istikharah or prays for guidance after thinking through tentative goals and action strategies and before making a final decision. In Istikharah, the client prays for God’s guidance in deciding which route to take. Literally, it means “seeking guidance in what is good” (Al-Jawziyyah, n.d.). Since the client’s knowledge and ability are limited and only God is Omniscient and Omnipotent, he/she consults his Creator and seeks guidance in making the best decision. As Jabir Bin Abdillah reported Istikharah goes this way:

“O God! I ask You the good through Your Knowledge, and

ability through Your Power, and ask for (Your favour) out of Your infinite Bounty. For surely You have Power; I have none. You know all; I know not. You are the Great Knower of all things. O God! If in Your Knowledge this matter were good for my faith, for my livelihood, and for the consequences of my affairs, then ordain it for me, and make it easy for me, and bless me therein. But if in Your Knowledge, this matter be bad for my faith, for my livelihood, and for the consequences of my affairs, then turn it away from me, and turn me away therefrom, and ordain for me the good wherever it be, and cause me to be pleased therewith.” (Bukhari)

After Istikharah prayers, the client adheres to the goals and action strategies that become crystallized and he feels comfortable with. The client achieves Basirah or goal-and-route vision in this process. This vision would eliminate any confusion and further refine clarity of goals and the roadmap as well as the consequences of these choices. Through Tafakkur or contemplation, the client envisions the spiritual merits he would accumulate and the pleasures that this would bring about both in this life and in the hereafter. In other words, he imagines the benefits of the problem having been solved and how this would add to the ultimate goal of life, which is to worship God in order to achieve the utmost pleasures and well being in this world and in the hereafter.

Following prayers for guidance or Istikhara and settling on Basirah or goal-and-route vision, the social worker helps the client to make ‘Azm or a final, firm decision. ‘Azm or firm decision is the final step in the action planning stage. With the support of the social worker, the client could decide to work towards the desired situation, following the plan. The client could become firm in his/her conviction that there is no other alternative but to change the current undesirable situation and the chosen roadmap would lead to the desirable situation, God willing. This wilful decision would rule out any form of hesitation or resistance as the client becomes highly motivated and gravitates towards the goal. However, ‘Azm does not rule out flexibility in goals and action strategies, which is necessary as

circumstances change or new information is received.

*“Then, when you have taken a decision put your trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him).”
(Qur’an, 3:159)*

As a firm decision is made, the client puts his Tawakul or trust in God. The client resolves that, with the help of the social worker, the client would try to do his best but would leave the rest up to almighty God. One of the psycho-spiritual benefits of Tawakul is that the client feels relieved because, as a human being, all the burden of being one hundred percent correct in his decision and perfect in the implementation process is not on him. The client feels empowered because the all-powerful God is his helper in achieving his goal. We should note that, although Tawakul is emphasized after decision-making, it is continuously used throughout the different stages of the social work process.

Action (‘Amal)

After a clear vision, a firm decision, and trust in God, the client starts the implementation of the action plan. The social worker would help the client overcome any internal or external obstacles that might hinder the implementation process. The social worker would provide support throughout the process but the client must rely on himself after putting his trust in God.

"Whoever does good, it is to the benefit of his soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it; and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants." (Qur’an, 41:46)

*"And say (to people): Act; so God will see your actions and (so will) His Messenger and the believers; and you shall be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did."
(Qur’an, 9:105)*

Evaluation (Muhasabah)

Muhasabahor evaluation is the last process in the Islamic

social work model. Muhasabah helps the social worker and the client to determine the extent to which the chosen strategies have been successfully applied to reach the specified goals. To provide feedback loops, Muhasabah is used both formatively and summatively. This is comparable to the use of evaluation in mainstream social work (See Compton & Galaway, 1999). Like all other processes in the Islamic social work model, there is no distinction between the “material” and the “spiritual” aspects. Muslims believe that God will evaluate all of their actions in this world and they will be rewarded accordingly both in this world and in the next world.

“O you who believe! be God conscious, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and be careful of (your duty to) God; surely God is Aware of what you do.” (Qur’an, 59:18)

Pervasive Process

Isti’aanah help seeking is one of several main pervasive processes that are employed throughout all of the stages of Islamic social work model. Isti’aanah refers to seeking God’s help in the social work problem-solving process. From Islamic perspective, God is the ultimate source of help, although this help comes through the environment, including humans. Reliance on God and on oneself is expected in Islam. However, if there is a need, seeking help from others is encouraged to the extent that the client would see helpers as means only and God as the ultimate help-provider. Practicing Muslims pray to God “we worship You and we seek help from You” at least 17 times daily.

“And seek help in patient perseverance and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones.” (Qur’an, 59:18)

Muraqabah self-monitoring is another main all-encompassing process used throughout all of the stages of Islamic social work model. Self-monitoring is a metacognitive process that allows the client to watch

himself from the initial awakening stage to the implementation of action plans. The unique aspect of Muraqabah, however, is that the client knows that he is not watching himself alone, God is watching with him! This awareness leads to the client being honest with himself and consistent between his internal and external processes. The Muslim client believes that people see his external features but God sees his internal dimensions too. Among the 99 names of God are the Monitor, the All-knowing, the All-hearing, and the All-seeing. Muraqabah requires that the client is conscious of these qualities of God and manages his behaviour accordingly. The result of Muraqabah is genuineness and the consistency between the internal and the external dimensions of the self as well as continual behaviour adjustments toward the goal.

“God is Watchful over all things” (Qur’an, 33:52)

“And He is with you wherever you are; and God sees what you do” (Qur’an, 57:4)

One must reiterate here that the above-described Islamic social work model applies to clients who believe in and want to practice Islam, regardless of their background and wherever they live in the world. The model is based on my understanding of general Islamic principles that transcend cultures and sects. Nonetheless, social workers must be aware of, and respect the different levels of religiosity within the Muslim community. Consistent with the social work value of client self-determination, clients must be allowed to choose the extent to which they want to adhere to this model. It goes without saying that non-Muslim social workers could use this model with practicing Muslims. This model is still broad enough to accommodate any cultural specificity in any local Muslim community. However, social workers must be aware of any specific local cultural values that their clients might hold. For example, when discussing feelings or facts about their families regarding any negative event such as illness or death, many Arabs would likely use euphemisms. Abudabbeh and Nydell (1997), explain:

They often say that someone is tired when the person is

sick (He's in the hospital because he's a little tired), hesitate to state that someone is growing worse or dying, and hesitate to predict or even discuss bad events. Such events can be discussed more comfortable, however with appropriate benedictions such as "May he/she soon be better" or "God willing, may this never happen" (pp. 274-275).

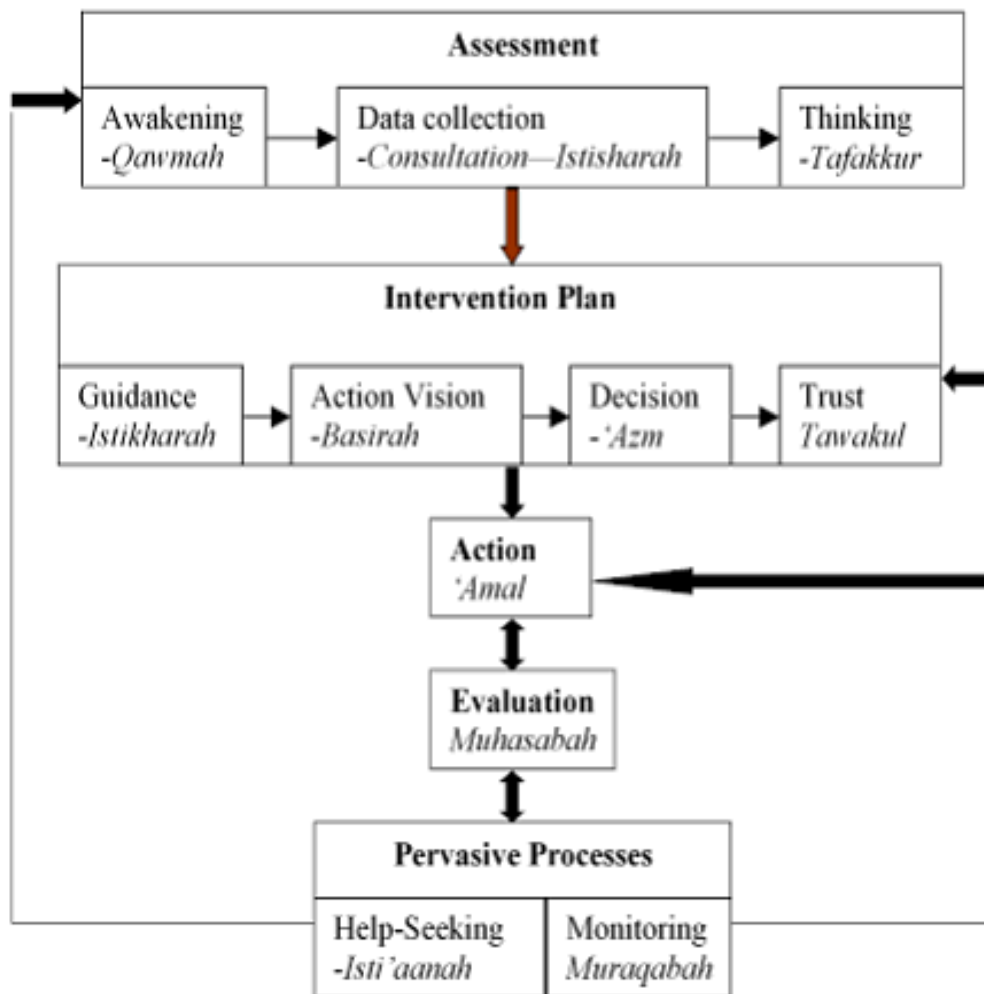


Figure 2: Islamic Social Work Practice Model

Conclusion

Professional social work emerged and developed in the Western world on the basis of Eurocentric worldview (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003a; Graham, 2005). However, due to social, legal, and professional realities in Canada, it is imperative that all social workers should be able to function in a multicultural society. Muslims presently form a significant part of the demographic composition of the Canadian society. Although professional social work has made advances in the development of general principles

of multicultural social work, little is still known about how the teachings of Islam could contribute to social work with Canadian Muslims. Likewise, I am not aware of the existence of any Islam-based social work practice models elsewhere in the world. While the principles of multicultural work remain necessary, I raise in this article religion-specific aspects of Muslim life that could inform social workers. I argue that while there are close similarities between the teachings of Islam and core social work values including upholding human dignity, social justice, helping the needy, and integrity, there are many points of divergence between the dominant conceptions in mainstream social work and the teachings of Islam. Differences in epistemological, ontological, and cosmological worldviews are case in point. Other differences between the Islamic perspective and the dominant approach to professional social work include the nature of spirituality and its scope, the nature and hierarchy of human needs, the source of help, the nature of problems and their solutions, to name but a few.

In this article, I attempt to go beyond the listing of social work-related concepts in Islam and making comparisons with mainstream social work, to proposing an Islam-based social work practice model. In this model, I articulate 11 Islamic problem-solving/growth-related concepts in terms of the conventional social work problem-solving processes of assessment, intervention planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, this attempt must be understood for what it is. The proposed model is a client-centred, problem-solving/personal transformation model, rather than a full-fledged, prescriptive social work practice model that tells the social worker what to do. It is based on my own understanding of, and life-long experience as a follower of, Islam. I am still undertaking studies aimed at developing the current model further into a more complete practice model. The revised model would indicate what the social worker could do to help the clients through the proposed growth/problem-solving process. The refined practice model could then be empirically validated. However, it must be reiterated that even empirically validated models should be considered more

empirically validated models should be considered more like one tool in a toolbox, rather than a master key that can be used for every situation! The model is intended for clients who believe in and want to practice Islam, wherever they live in the world. Nonetheless, social workers should be aware of the different cultures as well as levels of acculturation and religiosity within the Muslim community. With these caveats in mind, it is then up to individual social workers to decide whether, how, to what extent, and in what situations they want to use the proposed model. The arguments I make in this article are intended to stimulate further dialogue on indigenisation of social work in general and within the context of Muslims in particular.

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