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MUSLIM AMERICAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ACCORDANCE TO THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Riba Khaleda Eshanzada
003035863@coyote.csusb.edu

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MUSLIM AMERICAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN
ACCORDANCE TO THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

A Project
Presented to the Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master
in
Social Work

by
Riba Khaleda Eshanzada

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Approved by:

Dr. Erica Lizano, Research Project Supervisor

Dr. Janet Chang, M.S.W. Research Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

Islam is the most misrepresented, misunderstood, and the subject for much controversy in the United States of America especially with the women's rights issue. This study presents interviews with Muslim Americans on their narrative and perspective of their understanding of women's rights in accordance to the Islamic traditions. Utilizing a post-positive design, a qualitative data was gathered to compare Quranic text, and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad to daily practice of Muslim Americans in a Western democratic society. Participants acknowledged that although Islam as a religion has given women rights more than any other world religion and nation, practicing has not been implemented properly because of the cultural and interpretation barriers. Muslim Americans also acknowledge that the current political atmosphere in the United State has encouraged community members to become more vocal and practicing Muslims.

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds; and prayers and peace be upon Mohamed His servant and messenger.

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Chapter one, the assessment phase covers the introduction of the research question; what is Muslim American's understanding of women's rights in accordance to the Islamic traditions? This chapter will also explain the rationale for using a the post positivist paradigm to complete the study. The literature review focuses on the Quran, Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, and different studies conducted in the areas of women's rights in Islam. The theoretical orientation of the study and lastly, this chapter will discuss the potential contributions of this research study to micro and macro social work practice.

Research Focus

The research focus of this study is Muslim American's understanding of women's rights in accordance to Islamic traditions. This includes the Quranic text and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and Muslim American perspectives, practices, and women's rights in the United States post 9/11 era and the common misconceptions of Islam among Muslims and non-Muslims. The level of understanding and practice of Islamic obligation on women was

examined through interviews with general Muslim Americans. The interviews explored and compared the Quranic and Hadith text to actual daily practices in the United States. These interviews also shed light into Muslim and non-Muslim communities' common misconception, misinformation, and generalizations about Islam and Muslims.

Paradigm and Rationale

This study was conducted using the post positivist perspectives by interviewing Muslim American community members in Southern California. Muslims were interviewed on their understanding and perspectives of women's rights in accordance to the Quran and Hadith and its relevance in the United States. Religious understanding and interpretations may vary based upon experiences, knowledge, and other social factors; data was collected through conducting interviews in a qualitative manner. Post positivist paradigm was an appropriate paradigm because it allowed for objective data gathering based upon the level of understanding, interpretation, and realities of Muslim Americans in a natural environment. By establishing a relationship between the actual Quranic texts, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad through collected Hadith. This data also compared the text to actual practice in a modern Democratic nation and the struggles and obstacles of Muslim Americans. Post positivist approach also allowed for the focus of the study to develop as interviews were conducted and analyzed.

Literature Review

Quran, is a holistic book for Muslims, where one can find an answer or a guideline to all aspects of life. The Quranic text in this section is labeled with subheading examining rights of women in all phases of life from cradle to the grave. Also, Prophet Muhammad's teaching and doing called Hadith are also examined to contextualize Quranic revelation.

The Holy Quran is a revelation similar to The Torah and Bible, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in 609 C.E. by the Angel Gabriel when he was 40 years old. The Quran has 114 chapters called *Surahs*, which contains 6237 verses (signs) of various lengths. The revelation was in the Arabic language and was revealed over the span of 23 years (Shafi, n.d.).

The Haidth is the saying and doing of Prophet Muhammad, which is supplementary to the Quran as a source of guidance, religious laws, and regulations. The Hadith is the second pillar after the Quran that every Muslim believes and obeys. The Hadith consist of text (Mat'n) and the chain of transmitters of a certain Hadith (Isnad or proof) (Hisham, 2012).

Muslim scholars have divided the Hadith into categories according to the degree of authenticity and reliability; each category has to meet certain criteria.

The categories are as follows:

1. *Sahih*: The genuine Hadith, the authentic ones.
2. *Moothaq*: Almost like the Sahih but the narration is not as strong as

those of the Sahih.

3. *Hassan*: The fair Hadith although inferior in matter of authenticity.
4. *Dha'eef*: The weak Haidth which are not so reliable' (Hisham, 2012).

In Shari'ah (Islamic Constitution) deeds and actions are divided into five classes:

1. *Fardh or Wajib*: An obligatory duty the omission of which is Islamically punishable, for example murder is not permissible in Islam therefore, this act is punishable.

Obligatory acts are praying five daily prayers, fasting the month of Ramadan, donating 2.5 percent of an individual's income to local community, and performing Hajj once in a lifetime. Hajj is a pilgrimage to The House of God in Mecca, Saudi Arabia which was built by Abraham and Ishmael, depending upon an individual's physical and financial abilities to make the journey to Kabah.

The above five duties are also known as the five pillars of Islam that must be completed for one to be considered a Muslim.

2. *Mustahab*: An action which is rewarded, but whose omission is not punishable (Hisham, 2012). An example of this is fasting Mondays and Thursdays as Prophet Muhammad did, or praying extra prayers.
3. *Mubaah*: An action, which is permitted but legally, is indifferent (Hisham, 2012). For example, celebrating birthdays, New Years etc.

4. *Makrooh*: An action, which is disapproved by the Shari'ah but is not under any penalty (Hisham, 2012). For example, eating meat that is not blessed, similar to Kosher food, which is Halal meet in Islam.

5. *Haram*: An action, which is forbidden, and Islamically punishable (Hisham, 2012). Depriving someone of their basic rights such as not allowing women marry who she wishes, or forced and arranged marriages without the women's consents, murder, rape etc.

The Three Abrahamic Traditions.

Muslims believe that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are one evolving religion. Starting with Adam who brought the message of One True God to the final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that we are all from one Abrahamic tradition, Moses and Jesus are the descendent of Isaac, and Muhammad is the direct descendent of Ishmael, therefore Jews, Christians, and Muslims and from one Monotheistic religion. The following verse from the Quran emphasizes the unity of all messengers:

'Say (O Muhammad SAW): "We believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob) and Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)] and what was given to Musa (Moses), 'Iesa (Jesus) and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one

another among them and to Him (Allah) we have submitted (in Islam)"
(Surat Al-Imran, 3:84).

Therefore, Muslims believe in most of the tenants of Judaism and Christianity. The difference in practice and belief are minor and the interpretation has been evolved given the time and the conditions of the people. Muslims believe that the Quran is the final book completing the Torah and the Bible and therefore the essences of the previous Books are embedded in the Quran. Similar to all three religions the interpretation and understanding of the Quranic text and Hadith may vary from person to person for various reasons, such as time, environment, situations, and personal experiences. Most Muslim scholar considers the Quranic text to be four dimensional, meaning that it speaks to the reader in every part of the world through different generations until the end of time. Depending upon what the reader seeks, the Quran will give the answer to the reader's quest for answers.

Muslim scholars have dedicated centuries into providing readers of comprehensive basic understanding of the religion that can be applied to any situation at any given time. It is noteworthy to state that such narrations even by the most educated Islamic scholar has to be verified and examined before releasing such interpretations or narrations to the general public.

In the realm of social work the needs of people will change given the social environment. These realities of different social norms have altered the interpretations of social justice, and women's rights throughout the centuries. The

following Quranic text and the Hadith of the Prophet gives a basic outline on the obligations of women's rights in accordance to Islam, and the similarities and differences in the Christian religion according to the Bible.

Social Justice in Islam

“O you who believe, be upright for God, and (be) bearers of witness with justice!..” (Quran 5:8)

God commands the believers to be a witness for justice and do so regardless of time and social norms because ‘being upright’ is to stand firm despite the social, political, and environmental influences. In the following verse, the command is made to stand with justice regardless who the oppressor is and who is being oppressed. He further commands to stand regardless of kinship, and financial stature.

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives, or whether it is against the rich or the poor...” (Quran 4:135)

The above text reaffirms the priority of justice and equality above all other relations and monetary gains in order to have a fulfilled life within a family unit and community at large.

Researchers in Indonesia conducted a study of Kohlberg's moral reasoning among Muslim college students in 2004 and in 2006 to understand the relationship between religion and social justice. According Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning that was developed in 1981; an individual processes six stages

of moral judgments their developmental stages. In stage one; young children consider certain behavior as bad because of the potential punishment from a caretaker or an authority figure. In stage two, good behaviors serve one's own purpose or pleasure. In stages three, a person will wait for what others consider important and have good behavior or motives for reciprocal relationship with others. In the next stage, a person will conform by laws and regulations for the good of community or institution in relations to individual's values in terms of place in society and considers what is morally acceptable by authority. The highest level of moral development in stage 5; in this stage an individual emphasis on social and individual's rights, where laws and regulations are relative to society that makes them agree to uphold rules and regulations. These types of individuals 'value ethics above laws or social agreements' (Ji, Ibrahim, & Kim, 2009).

The findings of the study were that there is a link between intrinsic religiosity and principled moral reasoning in the area of social justice and equality. Moreover, Islam in particular is conducive to Kohlbergian principled reasoning in justice and equality. The findings also demonstrated that Muslims who regularly practiced meditation or daily prayers were more principled in their reasoning about justice and equality. Researchers also concluded that "prayers also enhance social and global peace as well as awareness of personal responsibility to others and society" (Davies & Alexander, 2005).

Muslims tend to develop a higher level of moral reasoning and a positive influence as a meaning system; which is defined as ‘a dynamic set of mental processes that affect and integrate cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioral element’ (Ji et al., 2009). This observation also concluded that Islam assists people in finding meaning of life, recognize limits, knowledge of oneself effectively, strategize religious faith, and ability to monitor religious behaviors and practices. These types of mental processes help Muslims conceptualize and the ability to reflect over various ethical issues and “reasoning by connecting with others, human rights, dignity, and universal ethical principles” (Ji et al., 2009).

Since social justice and equality are the heart of the Quran, there are outlines on how to manage injustices despite disagreements. The below text refers to set aside any personal opinions and emotions and reflect objectively in order to avoid injustice. By excluding the human prejudice out of the equation, where justice is blind from color, creed, relations, sexuality and anything other factors which can lead to injustice and inequality.

“Let not the hatred of a people swerves you away from justice. Be just, for this is closest to righteousness...” (Quran 5:8).

The ritualistic part of Islam provides Muslims with Self-determination and regulation which increases structured attitude towards social justice, equality, and other moral issues that affect local communities and society as a whole (Ji et al., 2009). The Prophet compares one moment of being just to several years to worship because at times it can pose a challenge for various reasons.

"A moment of justice is better than seventy years of worship in which you keep fasts and pass the nights in offering prayers and worship to God".
(Qara'ti, Jami'us Sa'adat, vol. II, p. 223).

The above Quran and Hadith passages give the reader a clear guidelines on how to fulfill responsibilities towards social justice in any situation. Clearly, this also implies to women and the rights that are given to them by God, and we will discuss the various roles, responsibilities, and rights of women.

Women's Right's in Islam

Women's rights in Islam in essence started with Eve giving her the same obligations and responsibilities as her male counterpart Adam in the following verse: "Whoever does good deeds, and is a believer and then specifies 'male and female' God will give them an abundant reward (Quran 3:195). God speaking to mankind, men and women alike giving them their equal share of responsibilities, accountabilities, and rights and it also highlights that one is not better than the other except for good deeds in the following verse:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (Quran 49:13).

This above verse also highlights that God does not prefer one race or nationality over another. It again reiterates that by giving women the same

accountability and responsibilities as men, women would have to be presented with the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

In the last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad before his death he reminds the Arabs and urges them to pass his message to others until the last day. The following sermon is reinforcing equality:

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a Black has any superiority over White except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.”

In his last sermon he also mentions the right of a wife over her husband:

“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under God’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as

never to be unchaste" (Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon Date delivered: 632 A.C.).

This idea of giving women equal rights in 7th century Arabia was a progressive movement and many scholars have considered Prophet Muhammad the very first feminist who actively advocated and fought for equal rights for women until his last breath. Women of that time did not have any rights; girls were buried alive soon after birth because the Pagan religion of that time considered giving birth to a girl was a shameful act. Islam banned this practice immediately God mentions in the Quran: "And when the female infant is buried alive, she will question for what crime was she killed" (Quran 81:8-9).

According to the above Quranic verses, Hadith, and the Prophet's last sermon, it is clear that the ideas and equality that we still fight for and have acquired throughout history have been thought and revealed to the Prophet. The abolishment of slavery, giving women equal rights, and placing everyone on an equal standing in all aspects of life is the most important obligation to a Muslim.

A qualitative study was conducted to explore some the reasons women convert to Islam in the West and the findings were that women felt that their rights were protected, as mentioned before, that Muhammad is considered a feminist who brought equality between men and women (Mamiya, 2001-2002). Others converted because of the appeal of historic and scientific facts, scholarly and cultural achievements (Mamiya, 2001-2002). One of the reasons African-American women convert to Islam is that they perceive Islam as the religion of

their ancestors in Africa, thereby returning to their roots. Also, African-American communities in the United States have associated some of the oppressions from the time of slavery to the beliefs of their masters (e.g. predominately Christian slave owners) and therefore, reverting back to their roots (Smith, 1999).

Education

Men and women are obligated to be educated; it is an obligation for every Muslim man and woman to acquire knowledge. The first revelation to Prophet Muhammad from Angel Gabriel was to 'read.'

"Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), has created man from something that clings. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, has taught man that which he knew not." Surah 96: 1-5.

Although the Prophet was unlettered, acquiring knowledge became mandatory for all Muslims and the knowledge that the Prophet was given was the knowledge given to him by God according to Islam. The Prophet had said, 'learn from cradle to the grave,' meaning to be a learner all your life, and this was not addressed to men, but to men and women 'Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim' (Elias, 2012-Al-Bayhaqi). Aisha the Prophet's was one of the greatest Muslim scholars, after his death people from the Arabian Peninsula would come and learn Hadith and Quran from her and consult in various social and religious issues.

Marriage/Duties of Wives

Marriage in Islam is a sacred contract between a man and woman. In this contract a woman is allowed anything she desires from her husband from money, gold, property to conduct and preference how the household responsibilities should be divided. The gifts that the husband gives to his bride are in two different occasions. The first gift is given at the wedding and the second is in case of a divorce, which is modern day pre-nuptial agreement. There are no limits on how much and what she is allowed to ask from her husband.

As mentioned before, marriage is a sacred bond and God mentions in the verse in the Quran: 'They (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them' (Quran, 2:187). The word 'garment' is used to illustrate that marriage between a wife and husband is the closest bond than any other relationship. Also, the parable of garment is used to illustrate that a garment protects against harm, and that it covers the faults and imperfections of a person.

The Quran states that the responsibility of providing for the household falls onto the husband. The wife's income remains for herself, another word the man has no right over his wife's income. 'And give the women (upon marriage) their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they give up willingly to you anything of it, then take it in satisfaction and ease' (Quran 4:4). If a woman contributes to the household expenses she may but it is not required. This is one of the stark differences

between modern day practice and Quranic text. The difference is partially because of the living standards, social-economic, and norms in America.

Divorce

In Islam divorce is permissible and both husband and wife are allowed to initiate the process. Unlike the Christian religion where divorce is prohibited and marrying divorced women is considered adultery based on the passage on Mathew which states:

“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew, 9:8-11).

The Quran states that if a husband or a wife desires to end the marriage, the obligations fall onto the husband to assure her safety, security, and provision until she is re-marries.

“And when you divorce women and they fulfill their term of their Iddah (waiting period), either keep them according to reasonable terms or release them according to reasonable terms, and do not keep them, intending harm, to transgress against them. And whoever does that has certainly wronged himself. And do not take the verses of God in jest. And remember the favor of God upon you and what has been revealed to you of the Book [i.e., the Quran] and wisdom [i.e., the Prophet's Sunnah] by

which He instructs you. And fear God and know that God is Knowing of all thing”(Quran 2:23).

The first steps of divorce is separation if both parties agree and the maximum allotted time is three months meaning in the above verse (waiting period) after this time passes the couple either reconcile or divorce. If the parties decide to divorce, the wife is entitled to the dowry (pre-nuptial agreement that was signed at the wedding ceremony) to start a new life, and the ex-husband is to provide for her until she re-marries another man. If there are children in the marriage, the mother is entitled additional compensation for taking care of the children, which is modern day alimony and child support. If the wife initiates which is called the divorce (*Khulah*), she's asked to give back the wedding gift to her husband and she's free to leave. In *Khulah*, the husband is not required to pay for her maintenance but if there are kids in the marriage, he is to provide for the children. If a woman is widowed she has the right to remarry, unlike the Pagan tradition, widowed women are not required to remain single. Some women at that time would remain single because of tradition but the Prophet prohibited such practices.

Women in Workplace

Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadija was a successful business owner when she married the Prophet. In fact, he worked for her and was 15 years younger than her; these privileges were given to noble women, like Khadija. Islam gave the right to work, own property and businesses to all women in the

following verse: Narrated by 'Aisha: The Prophet said: 'You (women) have been allowed to go out for your needs' (Elias, 2012). The 'needs' of women is open for interpretation because needs have changed and will continue to change based on the social, environment, and time. One of the obvious needs is working outside of the home.

Inheritance

The concept of a women receiving inheritance was a foreign concept to the people of Arabia at that time, therefore, the Quran mentions: 'woman has a right to inherit, regardless of her status; whether she is a wife, a mother, a sister, or a daughter' (Quran, 5). As mentioned before a man's financial obligations is greater than a woman's obligations. The inheritance laws are based on the level of responsibilities. In Islam, a man receives double the amount of a women's portion of heritance because of a man has to spend that inheritances on his family, while a women does not. However, there are expectations to this rule, for example, in case of a single mothers who do not have any other support will receive the same amount has her brothers.

Motherhood

In the Quran the importance of mothers are emphasized because of the difficulties mothers endure for her child in various stages of life from pregnancy and labor to nurturing and nursing. The Quran also commands to have respect for ones parents in any circumstances and to obey them unless it goes against

an edict of the faith, and to care for them in old age as they have cared for us as a child.

“And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months. [He grows] until, when he reaches maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years, he says, “My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to work righteousness of which You will approve and make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims” (Al-Ahqaf, 46:15, Quran).

It is a Muslim obligation to treat his or her parents well, especially the mother. In several Hadiths, the Prophet emphasizes this command, and here are a few examples:

“A man came to the Prophet and said, ‘O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship? The Prophet (PBUH) said: Your mother. The man said, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: Then your father” (Reem, 2012-Bukhari, Muslim).

Therefore, Muslim scholars’ states that mother’s right over her child is three times more than a father’s right.

“A man once consulted the Prophet Muhammad about taking part in a military campaign. The Prophet asked the man if his mother was still living. When told that she was alive, the Prophet said: “(Then) stay with her, for Paradise is at her feet” (Reem, 2012-Al-Tirmidhi).

Abortion

Islam allows abortion unlike the Christian religion that states: ‘Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born" (Letter of Barnabas 19 from 74 AD). The permissibility of abortion in Islam is under certain circumstances such as rape, if the pregnancy poses a danger in mother’s health, or any other difficulties, according to most Muslim Scholars (jurists).

Hijab

As mentioned before, Islam is an Abrahamic religion; therefore, Islam is believed to be the last revelation that completed the two previous religions (Judaism and Christianity). Therefore, the main tenants are the same as Christianity and Judaism. The topic of hijab, has been a source of controversy especially in the West. Although the First Amendment protects wearing of the hijab as a freedom of speech, this freedom has also been viewed as a political statement, refusal of immigrants to integration with the modern society, or a sign of Islamic fundamentalism (Sue, 2013).

The general view of a Muslim women’s hijab is as one who is oppressed or women who are denied basic rights. Contrary to this popular belief, hijab has

been part of the Judaism and Christian religion for centuries. The actual practice has been dissolved but Bible states in the following verses that covering of women is mandatory:

“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven’

(King James Bible, 11-6)

‘For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered” (King James Bible 11-15).

As mentioned before since the Islam is the final Revelation of Heavenly Books, the following verse completes the above Biblical verse: “...and not display their beauty except what is apparent, and they should place their khumur over their bosoms...” (Quran, An-Nur 24:31).

The word in the above verse ‘khumur’ means covering of the head. At the time when this verse was revealed women wore head covering and tucked the two ends behind their ears. Although, majority of Arabia were Pagan, there were Jewish and Christian tribes living the outskirts of Mecca and Madina Saudi Arabia. Hijab or head covering was a typical garment for women at that time and centuries later for Jewish and Christian women. In fact, nuns, Orthodox Christians women and Orthodox Jewish women still wear similar style of hijab as Muslims women.

Hijab is not only a scarf for a Muslim women, but an identity, a way of life, and a constant reminder her devotion to God. Similar to what Jesus had commanded the Christian women and women in his time, the Quran and Prophet Muhammad taught Muslim women and men the same teachings of Jesus.

“You have heard that it was said by them of old time, you shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you. That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (The Gospel of Matthew, chap. 5, verses 27-28).

Islam also teaches men and women to cast his and her eyes downward when talking to a member of an opposite sex, this is not due to oppression or lack of confidence, he or she is abiding by the Quran as well as Biblical teaching, “Say to the believing women that: they should cast down their glances and guard their private parts (by being chaste)” (Quran 24:30). It is permissible for Muslim woman to show her hair to few men in her life, for example, her husband, father, brother, nephew, father-in-law, and uncles from both sides of parents.

Hijab is for modesty, and modesty is a core belief in Islam and it has to be personified in every aspect one’s life in eating, sleeping, thinking, behaving, and how one appears, Prophet Muhammad stats “Every religion has a character and the character of Islam is modesty” (Elias, 2012-Muwatta). In Islamic tradition, society is controlled by women not men; therefore, preserving Muslim women’s modesty will have a ripple effect in society. It is typically a mother who raises boys and girls. The nurturing attributes of a mother has the most impact on a

child. Therefore, the society is intact by women; it is the mother who passes the moral values to her offspring.

Hijab is also a form of protection for women from being sexually objectified as we have seen in the Western culture, where it is a common that a women must look a certain way to 'be more confident,' completely based upon the outwardly appearances. Hijab nullifies such beliefs but rather focuses on the internal beauty, and knowledge of women. For example, when a man and woman conversant and if the woman is wearing shirt that even shows a little cleavage than it is natural for a man to look down, or look at her legs, or any other part that's revealing. This is not because men are incapable of being decent but because it is scientifically proven that men think about sex more than women. Therefore, the content of the conversation is missed, this may make her feel like a 'piece of meat' this may also affect her confidence in her intellect, and more aware of her outwardly appearances. Hijab forces a man to respect a woman and forces him to listen to the content of the conversation. This in essences empowers women in their knowledge and contribution to society.

A study conducted among Australian Muslims concluded that women who wear the Islamic hijab are less likely to compare their bodies to the impossible images on media and reported a greater body satisfaction than their non-Muslim counterparts (Dunkel, Davidson, & Qurashi, 2010). Several studies have been conducted on Islam, women, and hijab. However, there are limited studies on Islam and the variation of understanding, practice, cultural norms, and how the

text and daily practice correspond. Moreover, aside from the 'image' of Muslim women and their hijabs, there are insufficient studies in areas of women' rights such as inheritance, marriage, and motherhood. Nevertheless, the examples from the Quran and Hadith illustrate that the guidelines are clearly defined on many social issues that affect not only women but also the society as a whole. However, the proper practice of these guidelines seems to be misunderstood and not as clear as the text.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation of this study is systems theory. This theory permits the analysis of the manner in which the actual Quranic text and Hadith differ from practice. This system will also examine the variables within the system and sub-systems. Robert King Merton, who created systems theory, stated that society is composed of different parts that are interrelated and the operations have consequences as a whole (Elvell, 2009). Therefore, the variables in this study focus on are the environmental, level of education and understanding, and level of practice of the text. As a result of these interactions and understanding of the whole system and its subsystem, this will affect all humans in their immediate and outer sphere, for example, within the Muslim community and the majority non-Muslims in America.

Systems theory can be used to examine the roles and needs of the Muslim community in America and their level of understanding of Muslims in America as

it pertains to of women's role and rights in the Western Democratic System. Through data collection, some of the Muslim American's perspectives on various issues are defined and their potential obstacles and strengths in today's society.

Potential Contribution to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

According to Pew Research center in 2011 there are about 3.3 million Muslims of all ages in the United States as of 2015, which constitutes 1% of the total the United States population and Pew projects that this number will double by 2050 (Mohamed, 2016). However, the U.S. Census Bureau does not ask about religious affiliation, therefore, there is no official government count of the Muslims in America (Mohamed, 2016). Findings from the presentThis study can be utilized to understand the basic concepts of Islam and as an engagement tool for the growing Muslim population in America in the field of social work, mental health, and for training purposes in various settings where a comprehensive knowledge of different minorities are required to better serve the local community.

According to National Association of Social Works (NASW) Code of Ethics, the core values of social workers are to promote social justice and social change. Moreover, social workers need to be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to provide services that are culturally competent and with integrity to build human relationships (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). However, a study conducted among Muslim Americans concluded that

Muslim women are increasingly becoming target of hate crime and discrimination because of their clear 'Muslim appearance' resulting in poor mental health and higher rate of depression, anxiety and PTSD (Nadall, Griffin, Hamit, Leon, Tobio, & Rivera et al., 2012). This study also concluded that Muslim women are treated inappropriately in psychotherapy and Clinicians are encouraging these women to remove the hijab and offering inappropriate interventions creating distrust and avoidance of services (Kokoti, 2012).

The information gathered in this study can be used in both in micro and macro social work practice. In micro social work, clinicians can utilize this study to understand and help potential Muslim American populations in the mental health clinics. This study provides basic understanding of the religion and views of social justice, equality, and women's rights that can be a source of strength for potential clients. At the macro level, this study provides social workers, mental health professionals, Police, and Sheriff's Departments basic guidelines on how to engage the Muslim American communities. Also, this study can also be taught as part of County Cultural Competency workshops.

Summary

The assessment chapter introduced the research topic on of the study, discussed the post positivist paradigm rationale. The literature focusing on the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad along with Biblical text to examine the similarities and differences between the two religions in regards to

civic responsibilities and women's right. The theoretical orientation was discussed, along with the potential micro and macro contribution to the field of social work was explained.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two, the engagement phase of the study is focused on completing data gathering data collection; the role of participants and gatekeepers will be discussed. This chapter will also address the diversity, ethical, and political issues of this study along with the role of technology.

Study Site

The study sites was included participants' home and public places in the Southern California regions. In this post positivist study, the focus was developed by and clarified through engagement with the Muslim communities to gain perspectives on potential struggles, strengths, and degree of practice (Morris, 2013).

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

The participants were engaged by introducing the project to the first participant than through snowball research sampling strategy. Also, individuals were informed on the potential contributions to the micro and macro social work practice in their to both within Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Given the

current political atmosphere, the Muslim community's perspectives and capturing their narrative were needed to dispel some of the misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Next, participants were contacted first by the referring participant, then by the researcher with in-depth information about the project, along with social worker's role, and approval from IRB and CSUSB were given.

Self Preparation

The research question, literature review, and theoretical orientation were developed in assessment phase and through the interviews in the engagement stage with the community members the focus was developed further. Preparations were made by familiarizing with the Quranic texts and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad to engage the Muslim community to understand their perspectives and understanding of women's rights issues and implementation of these rights in the United States.

It is also important to note that the Muslim communities have different cultural background and level of understanding in Islamic studies. Therefore, preparations were made to address some sensitive issues regarding gender relations, women's rights issue, and interviews were conducted without any biases and communication techniques were adjusted. Additionally, mindfulness, ability to become an active listener and not to impose judgment or attempt to change the participant's perception or belief was noted.

As mentioned before, given the Muslim community's diverse cultural background, some issues were sensitive to one culture while it was acceptable to another. For example, in Arab culture, talking to a women regarding interest in getting married is not a sensitive topic or a taboo. However, when talking to an Afghan womenwoman, the want or need to be married is considered extremely taboo and shameful because of the association to of a 'sexual' need. Therefore, understanding the cultural background of each participant was vital in gaining meaningful data. Therefore, preparations were made to modify questions to avoid taboo or sensitive topics.

Diversity Issues

The Muslim community in Southern California is from seventy different nations. This community varies in ethnicity, culture, language, and personal history. The counties consist of Asians, African-Americans, Caucasians, South-Asians, Central Asians, Arabs, European, North African, Native-Americans, Middle-Eastern, Hispanic, and Africans. Some of the community members were first generation immigrants from various nations; some born in the United States, while others were converts to the religion. The population groups interviewed ranged in ageare from the ages offrom 18-55 to include at least two-generations and their understanding and implementation of women's rights in accordance to Islam in the United States.

Muslims practice Islam in accordance to their cultural norms, language, and level of education in the Islamic studies and other professions. For example, many Arabs believe that they understand the meaning of Quran better than other nationalities because the Quran was revealed in Arabic. Although the modern Arabic is different than the classical Arabic that the Quran is revealed and written in, but the assumption with the non-Arabs and Arabs are that the Arabs have a superior understanding of the Quran and Hadith. The diversity issues in understanding and implementation of the Quran and Hadith are multi-layered; knowledge of the different perspectives and implementation within the Muslim communities were needed.

Ethical Issues

A complete Human Subject review from the Institutional Review Board was completed and information was given to participants on the purpose of the study. Participants were assured that the interview answers will be kept in a journal inside a lock cabinet and destroyed after the research is completed.

Ethical issues were considered during the interview process when discussing the Quranic text and Hadith on women's rights in Islam with participants. For example, some factual information resulted in uncomfortable emotional response from the participants, such as lack of knowledge. Other ethical issues were from the vulnerable demographics such as abused women, oppressed populations. To address some of these potential ethical issues,

pamphlets were made available from community resources to the participant. Also, given the cultural and ethical concerns, listening, normalizing, and validating some these negative feelings with the participants was needed at the engagement phase.

Political Issues

Post Since 9/11 the Muslim community has been under a microscope in the United States and with the rise of Islamophobia and physical attacks on the community has devastated the Muslims in America. Especially with the 2016 campaign from the Republican candidate, and now President of the United State, which as a result, led the Muslim communities being on high alert. Although the backlash has only intensified in the past election cycle, but the Islamophobic platform has been tormenting the community since 9/11. Some laws that were passed have targeted this community based on their religious belief which is considered Unconstitutional under the First Amendment, but the justifications were made to keep Muslim Americans under surveillance with the passage of Patriot Act, and in December 2014, the Department of Justice explicitly sanctioned massive data-gathering program to map Muslim-American communities in connection with 'an authorized intelligence or investigative purpose' (Sethi, 2016).

Although the FBI acknowledges that the anti-Muslim crime has increased five times than prior to 9/11, and especially after the attacks in Europe and in San

Bernardino (Aliya & Sakuma, 2015). The surveillance of the community has not stopped and the religious profiling has increased. Council in American Islamic Relations (CAIR) the largest Muslim advocacy group in the United States reports that 63 Mosques has been vandalized through December 8, 2016, highest on record (Burke, 2015).

The media outlets have also played a role in demonizing and racially profiling Muslims by highlighting religious affiliation in every attack on American and European soil. Charles Kruzman from University of North Carolina conducted a study for Triangle Center of Terrorism and National Security and concluded that 33 Americans have been killed as a result of terrorism since 9/11, which accounts for less than one percent. However, during the same time period 180,000 Americans were murdered for 'reasons of unrelated to terrorism' Non-Muslims carried out more than 90% of all terrorist attacks in America. 2017. Just in one year 66 Americans have been murdered in mass shooting twice as many in 16 years after 9/11 by a Muslim (Non-Muslims carried out more than 90% of all terrorist attacks in America. 2017). The word "terrorist", or "terrorism" has been coined to refer tofor individuals who identify as Muslims, not for any other attackers and mass shooters in the United States. These criminals' religious affiliations are never mentioned in the media, reserving the title for Muslims only.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

This research was conducted in an interview format and some of the technology that were used in this phase were making phone calls to participants seeking permission, recording interview, and using Atalis tiMicrosoft Word to complete the analysis phase of this study.

Summary

In this chapter, the study site was identified along with methods to engage and inform participants of the study were discussed. The engagement phase also discussed the engagement with the gatekeepers, self-preparation, diversity and potential ethical, political issues, along with use of technology.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Chapter three, the implementation stage of the study addresses the research site, participants, and the participant selection process. Data gathering methods will be discussed, along with recording and data analysis of the qualitative approach. Finally, findings, termination, and follow-up procedures will be addressed.

Study Participants

The participants in this study consist of 10 Muslim Americans, converts to Islam, and Muslims who are born in the United States, along with the leaders of the Muslims community in Southern California. As mentioned before, the Muslim community is diverse; the participants vary in ethnic background such as South Asians, Central Asians, Asians, Europeans, Middle Eastern, Africans, African-Americans, Central Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics. This pool of 10 participants ensured representation of different demographics of the community. Male and female participants were selected from the ages of 18 to 59 which includes at least two generations of Muslims in the United States.

The breakdown of the Southern California regions consists of majority South Asians, and Arabs, Predominately Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese. Other identify as African-America, Caucasians, Afghan, and Bosnian.

Selection of Participants

Homogenous Purposive sampling was utilized in this study because of the research topic is the level of understanding of Quran and Hadith and its implementation within the Muslim American communities. This method is chosen because of its specification the community's common religious belief, age, sex, level of understanding, and practice of Islamic teachings, which gives an in-depth insight of the research topic (Morris, 2013). This post positivist purposive sampling technique is transferable to other regions because of the diversity, and variation of practice in the Islamic tradition.

Data Gathering

Data gathering phase began by contacting a known participantte in the study and asking for referrals to other Muslim Americans who would want to participate. Social worker informed the potential participant about the study, and the potential contribution to the non-Muslim communities by allowing the Muslim community to create their own narrative by educating and dispelling some of the misconceptions.

The interviews were conducted with members of the Muslim community by utilizing all forms of interview techniques such as descriptive, structural, and contrasting questions to clarify participant's responses (Morris, 2013). Descriptive questions such as, 'what are your thoughts about women's rights in Islam?' Structural questions such as, 'what are your feelings about wearing hijab?' Also contrasting questions such as, 'are you able to name three different rights that a Muslim woman has but is not practiced?' By utilizing descriptive, structural, and contrasting interview methods a detailed understanding of how participant's views of their environment, interpretation of the religious text, and implementation in the current political situation were developed. For example, utilize descriptive questions gained general information, such as length of residency in the United States and age. Structured and contrast questions were used to clarify and define questions such as level of understanding and implementation of religious text and how he or she interprets the Quranic and Hadith text. (See Appendix B).

Phases of Data Collection

The first step to data collection was by giving informed consent to participants before proceeding with the interview process. Participants were given a copy of the informed consent to read while the information was read aloud. Participants were also reminded that they may terminate the interview at any time, as the interview could explore emotional topics, especially first generation Muslims in America, and women who has been neglected and or

abused and leaders who are sensitive to disclose too much information because of the fear and potential backlash. However, to ease the participants during interview, a list of questions were handed to the participant to view during the process. This allowed participant to better understand the interview process. Participants were given a short survey to complete for demographic purposes (See Appendix C).

The interview structure began with an engagement questions such as giving the participant the consent form, and creating a familiar atmosphere for the participant to feel comfortable such as asking about his or her day and other 'ice breakers.' Next, developing focus on the Muslim community and the current political environment, and exploratory questions about their fears, concerns, and the needs of the community. Maintaining focus on the community itself, the Quranic and Hadith text to their daily practices in the Western democratic society, and the implementation of practice on their daily lives, and views of the larger Muslim community. Last, terminating the interview by reiterating and clarifying the responses, and addressing concerns (Morris, 2013).

Data Recording

The qualitative data interviews were audio recorded and saved after each interview was completed for coding and analysis. Journaling was utilized to have record a statisticaldemographic information about the study participants as well as data and reflective data.

Data Analysis

Bottom-up analyses for the interviews were was utilized and this allowed the theory to develop out of the data. By compiling a journal after each interview, the rationales for interview questions, interpretation, and responses were established. This allowed tracking the development of the theory (Morris, 2013). Also, by utilizing the a bottom-up analysis, the contextualization of the Quranic and Hadith text into the social framework were analyzed. The open coding of this type of analysis revealed the narrative and categories of women's issues, then the relationship between the text and implementation were revealed in axial coding stage. Selective coding were developed the theoretical statement, and conditional matrix unveiled the human interaction with the understanding of the faith. Finally, the study of the interpretation of the Quranic text for an individual, family, group, organization, and communities' in women's issue in the Islamic tradition was understood based their social environment (Morris, 2013).

Termination and Follow Up

Participants were given a debriefing statement at the conclusion of the interview. Contact information was given to each participant in case of further consultation and additional local resources were given to the participants.

Communicating Findings and Dissemination Plan

Findings were provided to the participating a final written report. Also, the findings were introduced to the Southern California counties' Cultural Competency Department and Spirituality Committee, along with mental health professionals, and Law Enforcement personal to help with engaging the Muslim Community. The plan for this study is to serve as a training guide to the non-Muslim communities.

Summary

This chapter covered the implementation process of the study, the data gathering methods, and phase of which it was collected, along with methods of recording, and analysis were discussed. Finally, termination and follow up procedures were explored and communicating findings of the study with site were also covered.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

Chapter four, the evaluation phase of the study is focused on data analysis, demographics of the participants, data interpretation, and implication of finding for macro and micro practice in social work. Data interpretation revealed participant's level of understanding of Islam, viewpoint on women's rights, and barriers of practicing Islamic teaching in today's Western Democratic Society.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed using bottom up data analysis through the use of Word Document open coding and four survey questions to obtain the demographic characteristics of the study participants. Several themes emerged from the interviews which include: reasons participants converted to the religion and what binds each participant to the religion, women's rights in Islam, common misconception of Muslim women and how these misconceptions impact each participant, the political environment in the United States, and concept of hijab.

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

The study consisted of 10 participants (see Table 1). There were 4 males (40%), 6 females (60%), 2 males and 1 female were converts to Islam (30%). Half of the participants were immigrants and half were born and raised in the United States, 40% identified as Afghan-American, 20% Syrian-American, 10% Palestinian-American, 10% African-American, 10% Asian-American, and 10% Native American-European and all the participants considered themselves as 'practicing Muslim,' age ranging from 26 to 59 years with a median age of 35.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristic of Participants

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	4	40
Female	6	60
<i>Converts</i>		

Male	2	20
Female	1	10
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Afghan-American	4	40
Syrian-American	2	20
African-American	1	10
Asian-American	1	10
Palestinian-American	1	10
Native-American-European	1	10

Interviews and data were analyzed, themes were developed and quotes that conveyed important ideas, beliefs, and experiences among the participants are highlighted. These themes were further developed with notes written after each interview. Each interview question and theme is supported with a quote from participants pertaining to that particular premise and interview question.

Views of Islam among Participants

The first theme that emerged was the Oneness of God and Unity among all participants and the subtheme among the convert were their experience in Islam in comparison with Christianity.

Oneness of God

Participant #1 (June, 2017). : I would say the number one thing that attracted me was the oneness of God and nothing is to be associated with God. And. I also like that, there is logic and faith. That flowed together in Islam. That's that is the Comparing like my experience with Christianity.

Participant #2 (June, 2017). I would say what I love about this religion is the concept of unity. We're united not by race, creed and other things but by religion. There's no racism in Islam. This religion and the teachings of the Prophet has made me a better, happier person because of the easiness of it.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). I was attracted to it ever since I was younger or a child because I always believed that God was one and with the Christian faith they believe Jesus Son of God.

Participants were further asked to clarify since the Oneness of God is also also part of Christianity which is a monotheistic religion.

Oneness of God in Christianity

Participant #1(June, 2017). It's a monotheistic religion but oftentimes in different branches of Christianity there is a strong association with Jesus

Christ being equivalent to God. And is the association of the Holy Spirit being equivalent to God. And there's this idea that in order to get to God or in order to ask forgiveness from God you have to go through the Son of God which is Jesus. I rather go to God than have like a mediator having to feel like. I have to talk to Jesus or ask Jesus for forgiveness to get to God. I just want to be able to feel like I can go straight to God. Yeah and because Islam gave me that I've never felt closer to God than I've ever felt before.

Participant #4 (July, 2017) I was previously was a Catholic or Roman Catholic. And a lot of the practices they perform were questionable and their priests or their instructors can't really answer any of the questions I would ask them.

How Trinity did come to existence? Or how or why did they call it the Trinity? And why is there a Trinity so that just doesn't make any sense for me or God himself to become a man a subordinate that he created with His powers that he created.... with his power is to become one of us that he controls.

Participants were asked about the challenges within the Muslim community and several subthemes emerged, such as interpretation of the Quranic and Hadith texts, generational gap, and nearly all participants believe that the biggest challenge is overcoming cultural barriers, meaning culture is practiced more than the Islamic teaching.

Culture and Generational Gap

Participant #2 (June, 2017) I mean a lot of it is more cultural but then they kind of make it a religious thing. For instance, let's say the way we dress. Right? So some Muslims kind of dress in tobies, you know the long garments that men wear.

Participant #5 (July 2017) Our Generation, we brought our traditions with us to this country and start getting a little you know learning and teaching religion to our children....but at the same time we have a lot of bad things about us you know that we brought with us.

Participant #8 (August, 2017) One of the challenges that we have a generational challenge with the older generation and the younger generation I feel like what the younger generation wants to in the Muslim community is different than what the older generation wants. And I think that's one issue we have a challenge.

The third theme that emerged was most of the participants (80%) stated that they have been discriminated in the United States, the 20% who didn't experience any form of discrimination where converts to Islam who didn't visibility 'look Muslim.'

Participant #1 (June, 2017). ...white skin heads Shouted. Words like. 'Oh look at Terrorist'. Things like that because of the hijab I was clearly identified as a Muslim because of the hijab.

Participant #2 (June, 2017). Yeah. I mean I guess when I travel with going through TSA or something...I do get the extra pat down. I don't necessarily 'look' Muslim because Islam is a religion not a race. So having like a Muslim name is what gets me stopped. When I went to Europe. I got detained I couldn't come home. I'm a U.S. citizen.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). Yes. I mean as a as a black man I mean not even as a black man but I think anyone that is a minority one time or another are still discriminated against in our country unfortunately. If I like depending on how I'm dressed. Just coming from the gym at if... Let's just say walk into a store then I probably get more. I'm more likely to probably looked at closer, or kept an eye on.

The fourth theme that emerged was that all participants believe that women have equal rights as men according to the Islamic teaching and all believe that these rights are not practiced because of cultural barriers, proper knowledge of Islam, and Interpretation. Most participants believe that Muslim women have more rights than Christian women.

Women's Rights

Participant 2 (June, 2017). Islam is the first religion to allow women to vote, own property.....I mean in America women were not even allowed to vote until like 1920s. So we're way ahead of the game and in my opinion.

Participant #5 (July, 2017). First of all you know our Prophet Muhammad's first wife Khadija was a business women. She had trading

company. She had him working for her before she got married.....know there were women worriers and fighters (Mujahdoon).

Participant #7 (August, 2017). A woman has the right to educate herself as her husband has no right to say so yes or no. She has the right to work. Her husband has no right over her money. She can willingly spend it or not and keep it for herself. Those are extra rights that women have in Islam that others don't.

Participant #9 (August, 2017). You know thousands of years ago like the right to vote you know the right to own property the right to know a divorce a right to education so many things that people in this country had to fight for.

Cultural Barriers

Participant #9 (August, 2017). There are some countries like Saudi Arabia woman don't have a right to drive or right to vote. And in Afghanistan women have the right to vote and they do practice that right.

Lack of proper knowledge

Participant #7(August, 2017). Not everybody has the proper knowledge of Islam. They don't follow it properly. It's not that they have ill intentions just that it's lack of knowledge and understanding not all.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). I think it's a lack of understanding, understanding the Quran and you know ignorance. So you know a lot of people they feel I think that you know I have a long way.

Interpretation

Participant # 1 (June, 2017). I think that women rights are very simple and very clear. I think the way people interpret it is the big problem and the way I see I feel like in Islam is not black and white when it comes to women's rights. And I see the women's rights I see they have a lot like we as women have a lot of rights.

Participant #7 (August, 2017). Women have a lot of rights and a lot of importance in Islam. The religion itself however how it's interpreted in this... this world and the people who follow it me they twisted and they use it in their own benefit.

Christian Women vs. Muslim Women

Participant #7(August, 2017). Oh, they have definitely less rights. They're used as objects. They think of freedom when they're dancing naked at parties and they get paid that's not freedom. They have no power.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). Yes I believe that Muslim women have more rights because the Quran you know the rights of Muslim woman is clearly stated in the Bible the rights of a Christian woman is not clearly stated.

The fifth theme that emerged was the political atmosphere and the demonization of Islam and Muslims in media; which has forced majority of the participants to become more vocal about their beliefs and majority have started to practice their religion more publically than ever before.

Political Atmosphere

Participant #2 (June, 2017). Yeah, it has made me become more religious. I think it kind of confirm that....like.... I should or am...like you know you're fighting for your right.... I see people literally getting killed, for just being Muslims....I mean that's just kind of encourages me to do more and be more outwardly expressive of my religion.

Participant #3 (June, 2017). I think I'm definitely more vocal about it ...Like I used to be I really wouldn't tell very many people that I was Muslim I was ashamed of it for a long time. I was scared I didn't know how people would react...But as I've grown up and just become more confident in myself.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). I think now I mean I think a lot of young people are taking more pride in their religion because the fact is that like you know you don't know what you have until it's gone or taken away from you. And I think that with our political landscape though the hatred and disregard of the Muslims You know I think the younger people are pushing back they're you know.

The sixth theme that emerged was that majority of male participants believes believed that Hijab is 'beautiful' but believe it's the women's right and choice if she prefers to wear it, but all male participants fear for women's safety in hijab. Whereas, female participants also believe that it's a choice and associate a sense of identity with hijab, the 20% of the female participant who

didn't wear hijab, chose not to and stated that it's not out of fear but lack of commitment.

Hijab.

Male Perspective

Participant #2 (June, 2017). I fear for their safety. But I wouldn't. I mean if I was a woman I mean it's kind of hard to say this but women who do wear I think are a lot stronger because their religion...and they don't really care. And I think that's awesome.

Participant #6 (July, 2017). It's a little bit of both (fear and choice) because you know I've seen how people look at a woman wearing hijab on the street and just looking..I mean if a Christian woman wear it, like a veil. But no looks at them differently, but if a Muslim woman. Just people look at them.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). I think it's beautiful. My wife wears a hijab. But I think it's also women's choice of whether she's ready to wear hijab or not. I don't think anybody no man or anybody else for that matter should tell her when or how to wear it whenever she's ready to wear is right for her.

Female Perspective

Participant #1 (June, 2017). I love it. I do. I feel like it. And it brings a lot of positive aspects of wearing the hijab. There's this closeness a Muslim

woman can get to God by wearing hijab. There's modesty that a woman can express. There's also the sense of identity

Participant #8 (August, 2017). So I feel like without it I'm not who I am in fact because of the hijab I got my confidence. I wasn't really that talkative over confident. I feel like I'm different than others.

The seventh theme that emerged was that all participants believed that the common misconceptions about Muslim women are that they're oppressed; have little to no right in comparison to their male counterpart. These misconceptions stems from misinformation and misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims by public officials and media. Participants expressed the impact of these misconceptions on how it affects their daily lives.

Common Misconceptions

Participant #1 (June, 2017). Inferiority, that women are inferior to men. That there's a lack of education than men, that they're only confined to domestic spaces within the environment than men.

Participant #2 (June, 2017). Oppression, they had to walk behind them and I think that's ridiculous. I've never seen that ever. Let's see... they had to stay at home. That is extremely false. I have sisters. A mom didn't do any of those things whatsoever. They drive, they're very independent. They do their thing. They are very vocal about everything politics, religion. They're really passionate about their rights. So definitely not the case...

Participant #9 (August, 2017). Muslim women that were forced to wear the hijab... They think that we're oppressed because of the way religion has. I hate that word. Like really Yeah because it's something so visual you see right away.

Impact of misconceptions

Participant #2 (June, 2017). Upset that people aren't educated enough and apparently they don't know that many Muslims.

Participant #9. Definitely frustrates me. But it's sad. But like with everything that's going on in the media and that's been going on for years and things we see almost become desensitized.

Participant #10 (August, 2017). A little upset about it because growing up I always had to get to know somebody...they see Muslim sister with hijab they automatically think these misconceptions. They don't try to actually get to know a person. Why do you believe this? Why do you do this? There's no more questions there. Just everyone's know it all.

Data Interpretation

Muslim American's understanding of women's rights in accordance to Islamic traditions is the central question of the research study. As the findings of the study were reviewed, it was observed that several subthemes cut across all nationalities, age, level of practice, and gender. These subthemes were that

culture can be a hindrance to practicing Islam based on the Quranic and Hadith text, along with generational gap, and interpretation of text.

This post-positivist study utilized qualitative interviewing interviews method of Muslim American community members in Southern California. Interviews revealed that the research question was verified by this study as participants believed that the hindrance of giving women's rights are in fact part of the religion but not widely implemented or practiced due to a lack of proper knowledge, culture, and interpretation.

Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practice

Few studies have been conducted on Muslim American's perspectives on women's rights in accordance to Islamic teaching. The findings of this study are consistent with its theoretical orientation, systems theory. This theory permits to analyze how the actual Quranic text and Hadith differ from practice based on cultural differences, generational gap, interpretation, misinformation, and lack of knowledge. Therefore, understanding these variables of the Muslim American community, the study provides an insight of the struggles and perspectives of Muslim Americans.

The Federal Bureau of investigation reports that in 2015 crimes against Muslims were higher than any other time, there were 257 anti-Muslim incidents, up from 154 in 2014 (Clay, 2017). Mental health professionals are working to overcome obstacles for this community by creating interventions designed for

Muslim Americans. According to study conducted by Nadal, Muslim Americans face several types of discrimination, such as religious, gender, and demographics characteristic that leads to micro aggression, and the assumption that they're not 'real Americans.' She also reports that Muslim Arab Americans ages 11 to 18 experience acculturative stress, causing withdrawn, sad, and depressed (Clay, 2017).

This study can serve in both micro and macro social work, by educating mental health professionals and other human service workers who provide services to Muslim Americans in order to better serve them. A study conducted by Inayat (2007) highlights some of the challenges in serving the Muslim community and methods to overcome these challenges. The five components identified in the study as being key to serving Muslim communities include: therapeutic alliance, socio-political context, awareness of personal characteristics, competencies that facilitate multicultural counseling, and required trainings of multicultural counseling.

Counselors, social workers, and other human service workers working with Muslim clients should identify and avoid making false assumptions concerning Muslim beliefs. By developing awareness of sensitive issues and practices and working within the boundaries of client's religious beliefs (Inayat, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative for counselors to have a basic knowledge of Islam and its tenets.

Socio-Political Context

The fear of Islam and Muslims has led to stereotypical conversations in the media, resulting in job discrimination, employment discrimination, health, education, violence involving verbal, physical abuse, and vandalizing property (Inayat, 2007). Thus, counselors' lack of proper understanding of the religion can lead to additional socio-political discrimination against Muslim clients. Therefore, counselors, social workers, and other human service workers need to work across various dimensions of structural difference and power to serve clients and to draw a 'person-centered theory to explore how critical therapeutic practice can attend to both the individual and his/her social context (Inayat, 2007, pg. 289).

Therapeutic Relationship

Muslim clients underutilize mental health services for several reasons such as, mistrust of service providers, fear of inappropriate treatment, fear of racism and discrimination, language barriers, difference in communications, and cultural barriers. Counselors, social workers, and other human service workers must become knowledgeable that despite the cultural and language barriers, Muslims adhere to one text which is the Quran and Hadith. Counselors' understanding of basic Islamic knowledge will help interpret client's distress in multicultural settings (Inayat, 2007).

Counselor Training

Multicultural training not only increases awareness and knowledge but also recognizes differences and imbeds culture and religion in interventions.

Moreover, According to National Association of Social Works (NASW) Code of Ethics, the core values of social workers are to promote social justice and social change. Social workers need to be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to provide services that are culturally competent and with integrity to build human relationships (NASW, 2017).

Summary

This chapter covered analysis of data, including major themes and subthemes. Major themes included concepts that bound Muslims to Islam, cultural differences, women's rights, hijab, generational gap, discrimination, common misconceptions, and their effects on the Muslim community. Data interoperation was also discussed along with implications of micro and macro implication to social work.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

Chapter five, termination and follow up stage of study focuses on communicating findings to study participants, the ongoing relationship with participants, and finally dissemination plan is discussed.

Termination of Study

Termination was initiated with participants during the interview phase; contact information of the researcher was provided to the participants in case they had any study related questions in the future. Participants will be given summary of study focus, implication of results on the Muslim American community, and potential benefits of finding, along with debriefing statement.

Communicating Findings to Study Participants

A final report was prepared based on the requirements of the study. The final report includes the initial research focus, purpose of the study, micro and macro implication, along with themes of the data analysis and outcomes along with allowing Muslim Americans to create their own narrative.

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The researcher has developed an ongoing relationship with participants and their Mosques. The researcher will continue to be available for consultation with participants and leaderships of the Mosques to help create an action plan on how to help the non-Muslim community and providers bridge the gap between of mental health providers and this underserved community.

Dissemination Plan

Post 9/11 era, Muslim American community has been under scrutiny from media, political figures, from domestic disturbances to wars across the globe, and stereotyping of an entire religion, despite the diversity of its followers. The purpose of this study is to clarify some of the misconception and misunderstandings by allowing Muslim Americans from different ethnic group, gender, age, and immigration status to provide some insight to their beliefs. As discussed before, Muslim Americans are an underserved population in the mental health and other social service fields due to stigma of illness and fear of judgment, inappropriate interventions, and lack of trust toward providers. Therefore, allowing the Muslim American community to provide their narrative in this qualitative research study will help providers have a better understanding of the community members and also findings can be utilized as a training guide in cultural competency efforts within a public (e.g. county, state, federal) and private social service organizations.

This study will be published online, printed, and distributed to target audience such as County Cultural Competency Department, Spirituality Committee, along with mental health professionals, and Law Enforcement personal to help with engaging the Muslim Community.

Summary

The study was terminated following interviews and participants received a copy of debriefing statement. Study findings and its implication will communicated with participants after June 2018. Researcher will continue to work with community members to help bridge the gap of mental health services and the Muslim American community. This study will also serve a training guide to mental health professionals and law enforcements to help with engagement with this minority group.

APPENDIX A
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH

APPENDIX A

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON
MUSLIM-AMERICAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN
ACCORDANCE TO THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS**

We are looking for volunteers to interview on Muslim American's understanding of women's rights in accordance to Islamic traditions. As a participant in this study, you would be asked few questions about your personal understanding based upon your culture, level of practice, and interpretation of the Quran and Hadith text. The study will take approximately 60-90 minutes. If you are interested, please contact Riba Khaleda Eshanzada 909-728-0120 or email 003035863@csusb.edu.

Thank you!

**This study has been reviewed and approved by the
Institutional Review Board and California State University, San Bernardino**

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions:

1. What attracted you to this religion?
2. What did your family think when you converted?
3. What are some of the challenges as a convert in the Muslim community?
4. Have you ever felt discriminated in the Muslim community?
5. Have you ever felt discriminated in general?
6. What are your thoughts about the women's rights issue?
7. Do you think Muslim women actually have the rights as it states in the Quran and Hadith? If so, how? If not, why not?
8. What are some the obstacles you believe that hinder this community in giving women their due rights?
9. Do you think our political atmosphere has played a role in how you practice your religion?
10. **Question to women only:** do you fear wearing Hijab (head scarf outside) if so, why? If not, why not?
11. What are your feelings about wear the Hijab?
12. Do you think there is any difference between the rights of Muslims and Christian women?
13. What do you know about the rights of Christian women?
14. How do they differ? How do are they similar?
15. What are some of the rights you think Muslim women don't have? Do you think it's in the Quran or Hadith? If not? Then why do you think Muslims practice different than the text?
16. Name 3 different rights that a Muslim woman has but is not practice?
17. Common misconception of Muslim women?
18. How do you feel about this misconception?
19. What are you doing to correct this misconception?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY QUESTIONS

APPENDIX C

Survey Questions:

1. What is your age? What ethnicity do you identify with?
2. How long have you resided in the United States
3. Do you consider yourself a practicing Muslim? If so, how? Why?
4. If not, what are your reasons for not practicing on a regular basis?

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s): Riba Khaleda Eshanzada

Proposal Title: Muslim American's understanding of civic responsibility in particularly women's rights in accordance to the Islamic traditions

SW1743

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

Proposal is:

- approved
 to be resubmitted with revisions listed below
 to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

- faculty signature missing
 missing informed consent debriefing statement
 revisions needed in informed consent debriefing
 data collection instruments missing
 agency approval letter missing
 CITI missing
 revisions in design needed (specified below)



Committee Chair Signature

5/9/2017

Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

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