
ISLAMIC COUNSELLING PRACTICES AMONG MUSLIM COUNSELLORS

Mohd Azhar Ab Rahman¹, Ramlan Mustapha² & Saiful
Lizan@Hasnul Hisyam Suparman³

¹Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail, Terengganu

²Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang

³Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Temenggong Ibrahim Johor

Abstract

A proportion of persons The practices of spiritual elements in counselling is a requirement which is widely recognized by current counselling practitioners. This is because various problems faced by humans are not only arise from external aspect but also attribute toward spiritual aspects such as psychological and emotional issues. Hence, this study focuses on the practice of Islamic approaches applied by Muslim Counsellors. This is a quantitative research design to carry out surveys on Islamic counselling practices among the Muslim Counsellors. The study sample is a purposive sampling of 31 respondents randomly selected Muslim Counsellors comprising IPG Counsellors, PPD Counsellors, school Counsellors and University/college Counsellors. The data analysis is in the form of descriptive analysis that looks at percentage and mean using SPSS v.22 data analysis. The findings showed that the level of Islamic approach practice is implemented by Muslim Counsellors at a high level. Subsequently, the findings found that spiritual programs such as religious talks, prevention programmes like Anti-Smoking, HIV and Aids and leadership courses were successfully implemented in schools. Besides, this study found that there are several challenges that Muslim Counsellors have to encounter in applying Islamic counselling are lack of religious knowledge whether counsellors or clients required considerable time to integrate religious understandings in sessions and tendencies to instill values in clients when using religious elements in counselling. Hopefully that the findings of this study will generalize the implementation of the Islamic approach in Muslim Counsellors.

Keywords: *Practices, Islamic Counselling, Muslim Counsellors*

^{1**} Corresponding author: Mohd Azhar Ab. Rahman, Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail, Terengganu email: moazar2018@gmail.com

Introduction

The field of counselling is one of the fields that is beginning to receive attention in helping students who are facing various acute problems. Professional Counsellors help clients identify goals and potential solutions to problems that cause emotional instability, help to improve communication and adaptation skills, strengthen self-esteem and even promote behavior change and optimal mental health (American Counselling Association, 2016). Counselling is also said to be a relationship between the counselor and the client that needs to be carried out in one process (Daily et, al, 2011). In Malaysia Islamic counselling began to develop and was talked about starting in the 1980s. However, empirical research is very lacking, however, discussions on the philosophy and goals of Islamic counselling in solving community problems continue to be discussed (Norazlina & Noor Shakirah, 2016). In the 1990s, Islamic counselling services received the attention of several government bodies such as Yayaan Dakwah Islamiah and the Selangor Islamic Department. By the year 2000 Islamic counselling services continued to gain the attention of scholars. M. Noor (2012) presents some aspects of advice and counselling from the perspective of mystics, especially Sufi counselling that has the strength in resolving a case involving the human soul. According to Kamal Manaf (2000) presented a tarbiah approach in Islamic counselling based on the Quran in human development. Furthermore, Siti Zalikhah (2002) stated that research related to the process of Islamic counselling among troubled couples based on a case study in the Islamic Religious Department of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The results show that the Islamic counselling process is implemented according to the stages that are generally followed in the counselling process.

In the west, religious counselling services refer to a religious approach in terms of philosophy, goals, processes, procedures and problem-solving approaches. In the ACA (American Counselling Association) Standards of Ethics in the matter of "Ethical Standards Section" A10 emphasizes on respecting the spiritual and religious interests in the life of the client (Pate & Bondi, 1992). According to Sherzer and Stone (1981) religious counselling is practiced in religious guidance organizations. Coughlin (1992) stressed that religion or spiritual values are important to understand in counselling sessions because the personality, attitudes and behaviors are shaped from the client's cultural and religious values. Chalfant and Miller (1990), in a study conducted over 20 years proved 40 percent of individuals who seek help for psychological reasons prefer significant people with religious knowledge (priests and clergyperson) than professionals in the mental field. Kelly (1994) pointed out that 45.3 percent of Counsellors who participated in her study stated religion and spirituality were something important and very important in a counselling program. Genia (1994) suggested that religious elements be applied in counselling programs. Pate and Bondi (1992) also suggested that the importance of religion and matters related to counselling be a subject in counselor education.

Problem Statement

The religious element in the counselling process is not something foreign or new. In the west, more and more studies are being conducted on religious counselling (Watss, 2001; Miller, 1999) and demonstrating the importance and positive impact of effective religious counselling processes (Chandler, Holden & Kolander, 1992; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000; Briggs, Akos, Czyszczon & Eldridge, 2011; Richards, Bartz & O'Grady, 2009). The development of the use of religious elements in counselling also shows an increase in awareness to look at the Islamic view of life as well as the objectives and values that determine human behavior (Mumtaz F., 1992). Moreover, according to a study by Gartner (1996); Larson et.al (1992) as well as McCullough and Larson (1999) showed that commitment in religion is widely associated with positive outcomes such as

increased ability to cope with stress, reduced depression and anxiety, decreased suicidal tendencies and criminal behavior and also reduced drug use, alcohol and tobacco.

Salasiah Hanin Hamjah (2010) in his study on spiritual guidance according to al Ghazali and the relationship with its effectiveness in counselling stated that the application of spiritual elements in counselling has become something that is widely recognized by counselling practitioners. His research shows that there is a need to discuss religious practices in counselling and there are appropriate Islamic elements to be integrated in counselling such as prayer, recitation of the Quran, prayer and even salawat. The study of Roslee Ahmad, Mohamed Sharif Mustaffa, Sulaiman Shakib Mohd Noor and Ahmad Jazimin (2008) who stated that the Western counselling approach is no longer suitable to address students' spiritual problems and this approach using Islamic approach is seen to help Counsellors in dealing with clients' spiritual problems. Therefore, the lack of research on the application of Islamic approach among Muslim Counsellors then this study was conducted.

Research Objectives

- i. Identify the practice of Islamic counselling approach among Muslim Counsellors.
- ii. Identify the level of implementation of Islamic counselling approach among Muslim Counsellors.
- iii. Identify the form of prevention programs conducted by Muslim Counsellors.
- iv. Identify the challenges by Muslim Counsellors in implementing the Islamic counselling approach.

Literature Review

Studies related to the contribution of religion to mental health have increased since the early 21st century (Ellison & Levin, 1998; Young et al., 2002). This is evidenced by the publication of various journals related to the function of religion stimulating physical and mental health such as the American Journal of Public Health, American Journal of Psychiatry, Journal of the American Medical Association, Journal of Gerontology, Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine, (Ellison & Levin, 1998; Cornish, 2010; Young et al., 2002) and the Journal of Psychology and Theology and the journal Counselling and Values (Worthington, Kurusu, McCullough, & Sandage, 1996). Even researchers argue, by incorporating religious values in counselling is able to develop a holistic model (Tisdale, 2002; Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, & DeFanti, 2006; Myers & Williard, 2003).

While in the context of Malaysia there are several studies that focus on the importance of Islam in counselling. Among them is the study of Dini Farhana, Zuria, Salleh, & Mohd Rusdan, (2017). In their study, it was stated that counselling is a profession related to all aspects of individual development and it is synonymous with the philosophy of health. This element of well-being is not thoroughly debated among western scholars. While Islam associates the concept of well-being with the integration of the disciplines of naqli and aqli. This study briefly discusses the concept of well-being from Islamic and Western perspectives. The findings of the study indicate that Islamic and Western well-being is a holistic lifelong process, consisting of multiple dimensions. However, Islam has a more holistic point of view. This study also urges that more attention be given to the development of the individual self not only includes intervention but also prevention should also be given attention.

Amran Hassan & Noriah Mohamed, (2014) in their study, examined homosexual symptoms and treatment methods based on counselling and religious approaches. The objective of this study is to examine religious interventions and counselling to solve homosexual problems in Malaysian society. This study uses a qualitative method by using interviews as a method of data collection. A

total of eight respondents were interviewed consisting of those who are experienced in handling homosexual cases in Malaysia. The findings of the study show that religion and counselling approaches have the potential to solve the dilemma faced by the group.

Salasiah Hanin, (2010) in her study stated that the application of spiritual elements in counselling is a need that has been widely recognized. The situation is driven by various problems faced by clients also related to matters of the heart and emotions. The researcher focused his study to examine spiritual guidance from al-Ghazali's perspective applied at the Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council Counselling Center. The study also tried to look at the relationship between al-Ghazali's spiritual guidance and the effectiveness of the counselling. This study also examines the differences of marital factors with the tendency of Counsellors to apply spiritual guidance according to al-Ghazali in counselling. By using a questionnaire as a survey instrument, a total of 30 respondents were selected purposively among clients who have undergone counselling sessions at PK MAINS. The findings of the study show that there are several elements related to spiritual guidance according to al-Ghazali applied in the session, especially those related to tazkiyah al-nafs. The findings also prove that there is a significant relationship between spiritual guidance from al-Ghazali's perspective and the effectiveness of counselling that is $r = 0.469$; $p < 0.01$. There is also a difference of marital factors with the tendency of Counsellors to apply al-Ghazali's thinking on spiritual guidance in counselling i.e., $t = 3.450$; $p < 0.05$.

From the studies conducted, the researcher concluded that the Islamic approach is very necessary in counselling because the process of Islamic counselling intervention emphasizes the elements of heart, mind, spirit and lust. It is in contrast to Western counselling approaches that emphasize only the cognitive and behavioural aspects alone. While the problems faced by a person are not only related to his cognitive and behaviour, but the passions that affect his behaviour and way of thinking.

Methodology

Research methodology conducted with organized methods and procedures will be able to help researchers form, collect and analyze data accurately and systematically (Mohamed Najib, 2001). This view is further reinforced by the views of Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), explaining that scientific research methods involve the process of identifying problems, determining the need to obtain information, data management and understanding how to interpret research results. Failure to use effective data collection methods can result in inaccurate, vague information and can cause information overload while increasing research expenditure (Mohd Majid, 2004).

Research design

The design of this study is quantitative in the form of a survey using statistical analysis to see the practice and level of Islamic approach in implementing counselling, identify the form of programs implemented by Muslim Counsellors and the challenges in implementing Islamic counselling approach in schools. Quantitative methods require time to prepare questionnaires, conduct pilot studies, distribute forms and analyze numerical data. However, this study has saved a lot of researcher time as the pilot study was not conducted in this study because the questionnaire used was adapted from the previous study in Wong Su Huong & Nur Ain Elzira (2018) where the validity and reliability of the instrument have been identified in previous studies .

Sampling

According to Noraini (2010) sample selection is a very important aspect in doing research. Similarly, according to Sidek (2002), in selecting the sample, there are two important things that need to be considered, namely issues related to adequacy and representation. Adequacy is whether the number of samples selected is sufficient to make generalizations and the issue of representation is related to whether the number of samples is truly representative of the population under study. Since this research is based on a quantitative approach that uses survey method by using questionnaires, then the sampling method used is purposive sampling where respondents are selected among Muslim Counsellors in various agencies such as schools, Teacher Education Institute and District Education Office (PPD). A total of 31 Muslim Counsellors were randomly selected as study respondents to answer the questionnaire questions.

Instrument

The research instrument used was adapted from a questionnaire constructed by Mazidah Mohd Dagang, Raja Zirwatul Aida Raja Ibrahim & Azlina Abu Bakar (2015) and Halimah Abd Halim & Zainab Ismail (2015). This instrument consists of a set of questionnaires that contain three parts, namely parts A, B, C and D. Part A on the demographics of respondents, part B related to the practice of Islamic counselling approach, part C related to the level of implementation of Islamic Counselling approach and part is challenges in implementing the Islamic Counselling approach. The instrument of this study has obtained high reliability where the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.888.

Data Analysis

According to Mohd Majid (2005) data analysis means categorizing, ranking, manipulating and inferring data to get answers to the study. The data collected are analyzed descriptively to get the frequency, percentage and mean. In this study, the researcher implemented an assessment -based mean score by Creswell (2005).

Table 1: Mean Interpretation

Score Min	Interpretation Min Score
4.21 – 5.00	Very high
3.41 – 4.20	High
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Very low

Source: Adapted by Creswell (2005)

Findings

The Practice and Level of Islamic Counselling Approach Among Muslim Counsellors

Table 2: Mean for the Practice and Level of Islamic Counselling Approach Among Muslim Counsellors.

Num.	Items	Mean	Level
1.	I suggest the client to control his anger.	4.4839	Very high
2.	I suggest clients not be envious of the success of others.	4.3226	Very high
3.	I suggest clients take care of speech and not use abusive language that could hurt others.	4.6129	Very high
4.	I advise clients not to be hateful towards others.	4.4516	Very high
5.	I suggest clients do not take revenge on others.	4.4516	Very high
6.	I suggest clients not be arrogant towards others.	4.5484	Very high
7.	I recommend clients to always be patient over all the problems they face	4.7097	Very high
8.	I suggest keeping the five daily prayers	4.8710	Very high
9.	I suggest that you get up at night for tahajjud prayers, hajat prayers, istikharah prayers and so on to find peace to overcome your problems.	4.4516	Very high
10.	I suggest reading the Quran to find peace of mind.	4.7419	Very high
11.	I suggest that you learn to accept Allah's qada 'and qadar with an open heart.	4.8065	Very high
12.	I suggest to be confident and aware of the existence of the hereafter to count all the deeds done in this world.	4.7742	Very high
13.	I suggest that you leave all the affairs of your life to God and trust in him after trying your best.	4.8065	Very high
14.	I am aware of your responsibilities as a mother / father to children.	4.5161	Very high
15.	I am aware of your responsibilities as a husband and wife.	4.4839	Very high
16.	I suggest that repentance will not abandon prayer.	4.6774	Very high
17.	I suggest that repentance will not neglect the responsibilities of being a mother/father to children.	4.5806	Very high
18.	Saya mencadangkan agar bertaubat tidak akan mengabaikan tanggungjawab sebagai suami/ isteri.	4.6129	Very high
19.	I suggest that repentance will not hurt the wife/ husband	4.6129	Very high
20.	I suggest that repentance will not abuse children.	4.6452	Very high
21.	I suggest to multiply the prayers to Allah S.W.T for overcoming the problems faced.	4.8387	Very high
22.	I suggest doing self -reflection by reflecting on the good	4.7419	Very high

	or bad you are doing in your life.		
	Total	4.6246	Very high

The table above shows that the highest counselling approach practiced by Muslim Counsellors is to recommend to clients to keep the five daily prayers (4.8710), hand over all matters to Allah (4.8065), learn to accept qada 'and Qadar Allah swt (4.80650) and recommend to clients in order to control anger (4.8387). These findings also indicate that the level of Islamic counselling practice among Muslim Counsellors is at a very high level.

The results of this study show that prayer is the highest element applied by Muslim Counsellors. This shows that prayer is an important thing that needs to be applied to the client. It coincides with the verse of the Qur'an which means "Surely prayer can prevent abominable and evil things" (Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 45). It is also supported by the statement of Othman Najati (1992) who stated that the prevention of the human soul based on the five -time obligatory prayers is a preventive and therapeutic method capable of educating the human personality. In fact, the obligation to perform this obligatory prayer can clearly prevent heinous acts based on the verses of the Qur'an from surah al-`Ankabut verse 45. In addition, the element of accepting qada 'and qadar of Allah SWT in counselling is done by Counsellors based on appropriate cases. . For example the case of a client who experienced grief and frustration over getting low marks in an exam. The client is reminded with gentleness to be content with Allah swt's qada 'and qadar, not to give up and to make him realize that sadness is a test of Allah and even sadness can be a source of strength and inject the client's spirit to continue living (Mahadi 2007; Che Rozita 2007). In this study as well, it was found that Muslim Counsellors encourage clients to control their anger. Counsellors have applied the teachings of Islam in advising clients to control anger such as sitting if standing, lying down if sitting or taking ablution (Mohd Husaini, 2007; Zana Roslinda, 2007).

Forms of Prevention Programs Conducted by Muslim Counsellors

Table 3: Forms of prevention programs conducted by Muslim Counsellors.

Num.	Items	Mean	Level
1.	Prevention programs in the form of religious talks in dealing with student misconduct.	4.4194	Very high
2.	I held a prevention program in the form of anti -smoking, HIV and AIDS talks in addressing student misconduct	4.4839	Very high
3.	I conducted a prevention program in the form of visits to moral rehabilitation canters in dealing with student misconduct.	4.2903	Very high
4.	I held a prevention program in the form of anti -smoking, HIV and AIDS exhibitions in addressing student misconduct.	4.1613	High
5.	I held a prevention program in the form of an identity course in dealing with student misconduct.	4.4516	Very high
6.	I have a prevention program in the form of a self -leadership course in dealing with student misconduct	4.4516	Very high
	Total	4.3764	Very high

Findings show that the highest form of program implemented in schools is the prevention program in the form of anti -smoking, HIV and AIDS talks (Mean: 4.4839). Followed by prevention programs in the form

of identity courses (Mean: 4.4516), self -leadership programs (Mean: 4.4516), religious talks (Mean: 4.4194), visits to moral rehabilitation centers (Mean: 4.2903) and anti -smoking, HIV and Aids exhibitions (Min: 4.1613). Overall the programs run by Muslim Counsellors are at a very high level. These findings indicate that Muslim Counsellors are always committed in implementing special programs in the form of prevention as set out in the Guidebook for the Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Services in Secondary Schools. This is based on the high level of agreement by Muslim Counsellors on the prevention programs implemented. These programs are seen to be aimed at imparting prevention education information to students as an initial step of prevention from misconduct. These findings support the view of Khadijah Rohani and Nazariah (2007) who stated that the prevention approach aims to educate students to identify the pros and cons if they engage in a certain behavior.

Challenges by Muslim Counsellors in implementing Islamic counselling approach in schools

Table 4: Challenges by Muslim Counsellors in implementing Islamic counselling approach in schools.

Num.	Items	Mean	Level
1.	Lack of religious knowledge in implementing and integrating religious elements in the counselling sessions conducted.	3.7742	High
2.	Of the view that the use of religious elements in counselling sessions is a sensitive issue	2.5161	Low
3.	Clients who have no knowledge of religion and some do not practice what is commanded in religion	3.8710	High
4.	Counsellors have a tendency to place value on what clients use religious elements in counselling sessions.	3.2903	Moderate
5.	It takes quite a long time to integrate religious understanding in a counselling session.	3.4194	High
	Total	3.3742	High

The table above shows that the main challenges in applying Islamic Counselling among Muslim Counsellors are clients who have no religious knowledge and some do not practice what is commanded in the religion (Mean: 3.8710) and lack of religious knowledge of Muslim Counsellors in implementing and integrating religious elements in counselling sessions conducted (Min: 3.7742). This finding coincides with a study by Mazidah Mohd Dagang, Raja Zirwatul Aida Raja Ibrahim & Azlina Abu Bakar (2015) who stated that among the main challenges in implementing Islamic counselling is the lack of religious knowledge and knowledge and skills related to the integration of religious understanding in counselling practice.

Discussions

This study is expected to be a catalyst for more studies related to the integration of religious understanding so that counselling services provided to the community in Malaysia will be more effective and efficient when spiritual and religious issues are integrated in multicultural counselling practices. This is because there is no denying that religious and spiritual factors play an important role in the formation of the client's living culture. According to Salasiah Hanim (2010), the application of spiritual elements in counselling can enhance the effectiveness of counselling services provided while increasing the efficiency and professionalism of Counsellors. And it is hoped that if these two aspects are taken into account in helping clients deal with problems and issues faced in a more holistic manner it will bring about a change towards a

more positive development in the client's life. Both of these domains need to be given equal attention by Counsellors so that the counselling services provided will provide the expected results and will improve the quality of counselling services in Malaysia.

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