The Pros and Cons of Integrating Islamic Culture into Social Work Practice

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Abstract

Social work is a growing specialization that deals with service provision responding to the challenges of contemporary society, which require integration of Islamic culture into social work in relation to service delivery and other related services. This implies that there is Islamic social work that does not only concern Muslim recipients in the social work domain, but also the active role played by Muslim communities. In this regard the paper focuses on the Muslim-based organizations, and Islamic driven social work thoughts as vital aspects for integrating Islamic culture into social work. Understanding the culture of religion and spirituality in a precise faith is vital to service delivery. Besides religious culture, social workers need spiritual aspects to reflect their professional identity and attract the perception and expectation of the recipients. The paper defines social work and explores it from an Islamic perspective. It focuses on the Islamic culture in terms of social work and integrates ethical and theological realities into over-all social work practice.

Introduction

Social work is a professional action of helping individuals, families, groups, and the community at large to improve their abilities for social functioning and create a favourable condition for them to address their problems (Barker, 1991; National Association of Social Workers, 2001). It is a term applied by professional workers to address the suffering of clients from any deprivation. Social work is an academic discipline that identifies social problems and creates knowledge about causes, consequences, and potential solutions for those problems. In this regard, the philosophy of social work is based on empowering the clients to help themselves, focusing on uplifting the underprivileged sections of society to raise their voices and needs. Islam as a humanitarian religion is grateful to serve the deprived in the context of worshiping Allah and serving humanity as major two principles to fulfil religious duties.

The objectives of the Paper

The core objective of this paper are to:

1. attain a creative integration of Islamic social work into effective practice;
2. integrate Islamic culture of service delivery into social work practice;
3. recognize that Muslims are service providers using Islamic values and principles;
4. recognize the diversity of Muslim communities worldwide; and to
5. present social work from an Islamic perspective.

The Methodology Used in the Paper

This is a descriptive paper that sheds light on the importance of integrating Islamic culture into social work practice since Islam is a humanitarian religion that reflects the ethics and principles applied in social work practice. However, the data collection tools were both primary and secondary sources.

Integration of Islamic Culture into Social Work Practice

From the scholar's perspective social work has been facing many crises. These crises began at an early stage in the profession and put into question the effectiveness of social work practice. Consequently, political unbiased has deprived social work from a meaningful discussion of the practice, and has not allowed social work professionals and educators to consider their own legacies and shape a future based from the lessons of the past. Social Work is a profession suffering from historical forgetfulness and assert that increases a historical culture. Social work successfully addresses many social issues and problems. If there are some failures in solving social problems, this should not result in disregarding social work as a profession (Helsinki statement on social work practice research, 2014; van der Zwet).

At times, there are outside circumstances that lessen social work effectiveness. These circumstances include limited resources, social policy, and the implementation process. Therefore, it is argued that human theories and models of social work practice are useful in Islamic social work, for example behavioural theory, crisis intervention, problem-solving model, but other models and theories should be evaluated for appropriateness to Islamic culture and standards (Abdullah, 2015; Abubaker & Nasir, 2021; Hodge, 2005). These models indicate that such ideas have been influenced by other theories and outside perspectives. Social work is built on the experiences of practitioners and observation. In social work, professionals must consider the cultural aspects of the clients and the outstanding points under the prevailing Social Work Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Worker; Parrot, 2015).

The Islamic teaching about the characteristics of self- worth and human self-respect requires various understanding such as personal dignity and societal dignity. According to this paper it is not dispute between Islamic social principles and social work values. The other theory of social work is the importance of human relationships which is a requirement for social workers to know the central importance of social relationships.

In fact, people are social beings who need interactions with one another to survive, develop, and achieve their potentials. Based on this fact a society is not allowed to mistreat an individual and the individual is to respect the social principles to ensure the right and well-being of all the members of a particular society (Clarke, 2006; Zastrow, 2002).

Social Work Principles

The principles of social work include relationship, principle of self – determination, acceptance, communication, social functioning, individualization, respect, non-judgmental and confidentiality. These value bases recognize and acknowledge the right of others as humans, it also increases harmony that reduces inequality (Clarke, 2011; Furness, & Gilligan, 2010; Park, & Bradley, 2014; Pincus, & Minahan, 1973).

Islamic Perspective on Social Work Values
Social Justice
Islam strongly endorses the concept of social justice by judging people not based on their dignity and family but on the merit of their deeds. This means that social work values are similarly to Islamic teachings. Social justice is a key aspect for both Islam and social work.

Relationship
Islam advocates for keeping good relations with families, have a good social life, helping neighbours and being generous, well-mannered, merciful, kind, polite, respectful, non-judgmental and non- condemnatory. These are important aspects of Sunnah (Prophetic habit) which are in line with social work values.

Mercy
Islam advocates for showing mercy, compassion and generosity to others. Islam discourages evil deeds and hatreds against others; it emphasizes for maintenance of good characters and honesty in adverse situations.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is an integral part of trust building in social work practice as well as in Islamic life. Therefore, Islam advises to keep one's agreement in confidence without discussing it with others (Parrot, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2023; Cheung et al., 2014).

Dignity and Worth of the Person
It is required within social practice that social workers are to respect and honour the integral human dignity and value of every person, regardless of social standing. Practitioners are to treat their clients in a sympathetic and dignified manner, respecting cultural, religious and ethnic diversity.

Islam promotes human dignity and struggles against socio- economic injustice, it places a high value on human life, health and overall prosperity. Islam emphasizes the security of human life by making saving of one individual life like saving the entire life of human race. Accordingly, there is no disagreement between Islamic principle and social work values.

Integrity
Integrity demands social workers to behave in a reliable manner. Honesty and ethical behaviour are parts of dignified Islamic personality. Social workers are to be honest, and fair in interactions with the public. Integrity is part of social, legal, and religious duty of every human being in a society.

From Islamic perspective, integrity is the diplomatic code that serves as the foundation for human ethics. Qualities such as compassion, reliability, respect, trustworthiness, kindness wisdom, loyalty, and fairness are the core principles of integrity and emphasizes for its implementation in both words and action. Therefore, integrity under Islam is in consensus with social work.

Competence

Competence is defined as the ability to perform certain roles in each position. It also includes the integration of a wide range of knowledge, specialized skills, methods, personal values and experiences. In Islam there are similarities of other values such as preservation of dignity, social justice, individual worth and the importance of social relationships. The concept as understood in Islam agrees with the value of social work (Akgunduz, 2018; Gloria & Whittaker, 2025).

Activities of Islamic-based Organizations

The focus of non-profit activities of Islamic organizations is based on the major five actions.

1) **Religious Services**. This involves basic Islamic practices such as daily prayers (Salat الصلوات الخمسة) provision of necessary support to guarantee continuation of prayers in the various Mosques and Centers, fasting (الصيام) during Ramadan these organizations provide Muslims with break- fast (قيس الصائم) provision of zakat (الزكاة) to the needy and Sadaqat (الصدقات) to the poor. Other activities include. Training in the various areas to build up a capable Muslim who obeys the rules of Islam, organize for Eid festivals especially during honouring the sacrifice of Prophet Abraham (عيد الفدأ) as well as in the funeral places and marriages (Husain, 2019).

2) **Health Care**. In health MFBO maintain and establish dispensaries and hospitals to receive and serve patients including care of people with special needs.

3) **Social Welfare**. In this area charitable organizations and endowments prove unlimited are poor and orphans (Relief and Rehabilitation) (Ruhana et al., 2012).

4) **Education**. Islam plays a vital role in the field of education by offering Islamic education, seminaries which are facilitated to many students, training Muslim leaders (أئمة) and empower them to be capable in leading young generations correctly. Apart from these there are Qur'anic schools established by Islamic- based organizations for the welfare of Muslim (van der Zwet, 2018).

Lessons Learned from the Paper

1- That integrity requires social workers to behave in a reliable manner, honesty and ethical behaviours are parts of dignified Islamic personality.

2- In Islam there are similarities with other social work values such as preservation of dignity, social justice, individual worth and the importance of social relationships.

3- Qualities such as compassion, reliability, respect, trustworthiness, kindness, wisdom, loyalty, and fairness are the core principles of integrity and emphasizes for its implementation in both words and action. Therefore, integrity under Islam is in consensus with social work.

4- Islam emphasizes the security of human life by making saving of one individual life is like saving the entire life of human race. Accordingly, there is no disagreement between Islamic principles and social work values.

5- It is required within social practice that social workers are to respect and honour the integral human dignity and value of every person, regardless of social standing.

6- Islam strongly endorses the concept of social justice by judging people not based on their dignity and family but on the merit of their needs. This means that social work values are similar to Islamic teaching.

7- Islam advices to keep one's agreement in confidence without discussing it with others.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both social work values and Islamic values are in agreement in the terms of service delivery. The Islamic perspective of human dignity is beyond that of social work for its spiritual manner.

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