

## Muslim Counselors and the Western Code Of Ethics

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**Abstract**

The present study "Muslim counselors and the Western Code of Ethics" was designed to review and discuss the issue of the ethics of counseling as seen by Western schools of counseling and applied by Muslim counselors with Muslim clients. The study reports that Islamic moral values as stated in Islamic teachings must be implemented in the counseling process. For Muslim counselors the Western code of ethics cannot be applied blindly and without modification with Muslim clients. When the Islamic moral values are in conflict with the code of ethics, neither the counselor nor the client will be at peace with their principles. In this case, no real help can be gained

**الملخص**

تحاول هذه الدراسة التطرق إلى المرشد المسلم و الميثاق الغربي الأخلاقي الذي وضع لمناقشته و مراجعة قضية اخلاقيات الارشاد كما تراها المدارس الغربية و كيفية تطبيقها من طرف المرشد المسلم مع المسترشد المسلم.

تبين الدراسة بأن القيم الاخلاقية الاسلامية كما هو منصوص عليها في التعليم الاسلامي ينبغي ان تدمج في العملية الارشادية. بالنسبة للمرشد المسلم فان الميثاق الأخلاقي الغربي لا يمكن تطبيقه بذاته بدون تعديله حين التعامل مع المسترشد المسلم. حينما يقع اصطدام بين القيم الاخلاقية الاسلامية و الميثاق الأخلاقي، فإنه لا المرشد و لا المسترشد يشعر بالراحة مع هذه المبادئ. في هذه الحالة لا يمكن تقديم اي مساعدة.

## Introduction

The present study "Muslim Counselors and the Western Code of Ethics" is designed to review and discuss the issue of the ethics of counseling as established by Western schools of psychology counseling and applied by Muslim psychology counselors with Muslim clients.

The psychological professional counseling is one of the most important services that are greatly needed in Arab and Muslim countries. It is needed in our schools to help students understand themselves and have a healthy relationship with their colleagues, teachers and the family members. It is needed to help teachers find a better way in guiding their students to achieve their goals and select choices of their interest. And it is needed to help those who have personal or emotional or any other psychological problems.

For psychology professional counselors in our Muslim world to be affective and make a difference in their noble career, they have to be aware of the following three areas:

- a-Philosophy of counseling
- b-Moral values in human life, and
- c- Code of ethics of psychology counseling

Philosophy of counseling is based on the counselor's world views which make them unique from others in their actions and job performance. A human's world views are the basis for the principles that guide and lead counselors in their professional work. Counselors perform their work and build their relationships with their clients in a positive and professional manner based on their philosophy of

counseling.

Being aware of Islamic moral values is related to the philosophy of counseling that is stating the theoretical point of views of the Muslim counselors as distinguished from other professional helpers.

Each group of people has different moral values that are the basis for their concepts of the worldviews and the most important principle of their life. Being aware of the Islamic moral values is needed not only because the counselors are Muslims, it is needed also because the majority of the clients are Muslims. In fact, even if the counselors are not Muslims, the multicultural new trend is requiring that counselors must understand the culture of their clients and counsel them according to their cultures and their principles of moral values; moral values being the most important part of any culture.

It is difficult to separate or neglect any one of these three components: Without philosophy of counseling which specifies the theoretical principles of the counselors' work, we cannot specify the related moral values, as we cannot state our rules that we have to follow in our counseling. As such, the code of ethics in counseling or in any other profession is the most important part to be considered by professional counselors. Without a clear, comprehensive and specific code of ethics, clients will have little trust in the service and they might not seek help when they need it. This is more obvious in the Arab and Muslim world as people are more conservative and keener not to express their personal problems to people whom they do not know and cannot trust.

Code of ethics must be in line with the philosophy of counseling and

supported by the moral values of the client in order to be accepted and affective.

I- hope that the discussion of these three parts will lead to better awareness and understanding of the best process for Muslim psychological counselors in helping their clients understand themselves and fulfill their potentials as well as make the best choices of their life.

If this paper managed to succeed in making our respected colleagues feel more confident of their professional career as Muslim psychology counselors with their own philosophy of counseling and the related moral values, then soon we will have our own code of ethics that is not in conflict with our way of life and the principles of our culture. In order to understand the main concepts of this paper, it is time to discuss the concept of philosophy of counseling and its functions in professional settings. The following examples show the different types of philosophy of counseling: general philosophy of counseling, secular philosophy of counseling and religious philosophy of counseling.

## **II- General Philosophy of Counseling**

Philosophy of counseling or the philosophy of any other kind of profession is a system of beliefs that is meant to guide professional counselors or any other group of professionals to have a clear vision about the objectives of counseling, the type of relationships with the clients during the sessions and after the counseling time.

Philosophy of counseling can be personal or shared by groups of

professional psychology counselors who are following the same system of principles and beliefs and values. It expresses clearly the worldview and beliefs of the persons or the groups of that philosophy. Based on the philosophy of counseling, the client can understand what kind of a professional helper he or she will work with to get the help that is needed.

Philosophy is defined as system of beliefs, or values or a personal point of view.<sup>1</sup> When combined with counseling, the meaning will be more specific. It will mean the system of beliefs and values that is followed and implemented in the counseling practiced. Each individual or groups of counselors have their own philosophy or system of beliefs and values which distinguish them from the other counselors.

A philosophy of counseling explains the attitudes or beliefs, feelings, values and qualities of its holders and followers to act in certain ways in their professional counseling. It explains the views of human nature, definition of psychology counseling, goals of psychological counseling, the most important functions of a psychology counselor, the role of a professional psychology counselor, the essential characteristics of an effective relationship between the client and the counselor and how important is this relationship as a factor for change.

A philosophy of counseling explains the main values the counselor lives by and how these values might influence him or her as a helping

<sup>1</sup> The Free Dictionary

person. The philosophy explains the counselor's beliefs about religion, good life, freedom and responsibility, relationships between males and females, education, women's rights, counseling clients with different cultural backgrounds from the counselor, and counseling clients with different value systems from the counselor's value system.

If the philosophy of counseling is a personal one, then it might explain the approach that the counselor prefers in his or her practice as the most appealing and affective in working with his/her clients. By explaining and making these areas clear, the psychology counselor can utilize his or her experiences effectively with a wide range of clients including clients whose cultural values are different from his or her own. The main differences between the three types of philosophy of counseling, the general, the secular and the religious can be related to the worldview of each one of them. The general philosophy is based on the culture of any particular counselor and the client and it has no specific stand against any principles. On the other hand, the secular philosophy of counseling is in conflict with all religions and their worldviews. It has specific principles that make man the center of life as a biological being, ignores the spiritual part of man, and refuses the existence of God as well as the concept of creation. And of course, the religion philosophy is based on religion and therefore is in conflict with the secular philosophy of life as well as counseling.

### III. Secular Philosophy of Counseling

Nowadays the term secular concept is very well discussed by the media as well as by many people who are concerned about the differences between the secular system and the religious one. According to Rosalind I. J. Hackett (2006):

“With the media’s tendency to sensationalize (treat in a sensational way) and polarize (concentrate about two conflicting or contrasting positions) in many instances, it is not surprising that divisions between religious orientations, as well as between secularist and religious perspectives, are perceived as more arked now than in the past.”<sup>2</sup>

The term secular is used to emphasize that human worldview is not based on religion or revelation. Instead, it is based on the physical world. Secular school philosophy rejects religion in general and revealed knowledge in particular. According to the Council for Secular Humanism Web site...

“...the Secular Humanism Is a secular ethical philosophy that emphasizes a world view based upon naturalism: the belief that the physical world or nature is all that exists or is real. As such, it emphasizes scientific inquiry and rejects revealed knowledge as well as theistic morality. Secular Humanism is increasingly

<sup>2</sup> Rosalind I. J. Hackett is a distinguished professor in the humanities and professor of religious studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She also serves as president of the International Association for the History of Religions. As published in Human Rights, summer 2006, Volume 33, Number 3, p.21=24

influential in politics, ethics and morals, as well as education.”<sup>3</sup>

Clearly secular counseling is based on a philosophy that is in conflict with the three main religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In fact, the followers of secular philosophy are claiming that they are atheists or someone who denies the existence of God

“Followers of secular humanism typically describe themselves as atheists (without a belief in a god or very skeptical of the possibility) or agnostics (without knowledge of a god and uncertain of the possibility). The laws that govern the universe and mankind are the physical laws of the universe and are not influenced by nonmaterial or supernatural beings such as gods, demons, or other spirits. The concept of a god that hears and answers prayers is unproven and antiquated. Secular Humanists do not accept as true the literal interpretations of the Old or New Testaments, nor other allegedly inspired books such as the Koran. God, ritual, and creed are all rejected. The divinity of Jesus, the missions of the prophets and saints must be rejected”<sup>4</sup>

Secular counseling is based on the human principles that are based solely on materialistic observation. There is no place for any idea outside of human experience and nature which, according to them, is part of it.

3The Council for Secular Humanism Web site

4The Council for Sec

Secular people believe that there is no life after death! Secular humanism trusts human intelligence and has no trust in divine guidance.

“Secular humanism was founded upon humanistic and atheistic philosophies and is often identified as 'without religion'. A secular humanistic worldview is based upon the beliefs outlined in the Humanist Manifesto I(1933), Humanist Manifesto II. (1972), and The Secular Humanist Declaration (1980).

The main beliefs of the Secular Declaration includes that the supernatural beliefs have nothing to do with morals. To them morals are derived from human experience not from any other resources. Secular philosophy does not belief in creation as it claims that the universe is regarded as self –existing. Based on this point of view, human beings are part of nature and develop through time.

Secular philosophy is based on the beliefs that there is no life after death. This philosophy is requesting to transfer religion and its institutions into an experience of human activity. According to this philosophy, the short life is the only one that they are certain about it. The views of the existence of God, to them are meaningless!”<sup>5</sup>

Based on the secular philosophy of counseling...what kinds of answers are offered to the questions about the view of human nature? What is the counselor's point of view about his or her own philosophy of counseling and the definition of counseling? What are the convenient or not convenient goals of counseling?

<sup>5</sup> “**Secular humanism** is a secular philosophy based upon humanistic principles. Secular Humanists became a significant force in public education after the original Humanist Manifesto I was published in 1933. John Dewey, “father of progressive education, “is reputed to have been the author. Public education often reflects secular humanistic worldview”

And what are the most important functions of a counselor, and how as a counselor one defines his or her roles? What are the essential characteristics of an effective relationship between the counselor and a client? how important is the relationship between the psychology counselor and the client as an instrument for change?

Answering questions like these by any psychology professional counselor will be based on his or her philosophy of counseling. The philosophy of counseling explains the main values of the counselor that he or she lives by, and how these values became part of his or her life and how these values might influence the counselor in his or her work. The philosophy of counseling will tell about the counselor's beliefs about religion, good life, sex outside of marriage, abortion, marriage versus alternative life style, freedom and responsibility, antisocial behavior, using drugs, education and human rights etc.<sup>6</sup>

Psychology professional counselors are aware of the different answers that can be offered by different counselors based on their philosophy of counseling. The answers can be extreme in their differences between secular counselors and non-seculars who have their own different world views or philosophy of counseling.

The views of the philosophy of counseling have strong effects on the moral values as well as on the code of ethics of the psychology professional counselors as you will see later.

With all these principles as the basis for the secular psychology counseling, how can a Muslim counselor apply the secular code of ethics blindly without modification? At the same time, how can

6 See Developing Your Philosophy of Counseling

one expect a Muslim client to trust a counselor who is applying these principles in the field and do not feel frustrated or think twice before seeing a psychology counselor?

It is so natural that all the thinking which is derived from this philosophy will follow the same direction. No one will expect the secular philosophy of counseling or the moral values or any secular code of ethics to be in line with any religion. As such, Muslim counselors when counseling Muslim clients, find themselves in a dilemma. Which Secular Humanists became a significant force in public education after the original Humanist Manifesto I was published in 1933. John Dewey, "father of progressive education, " is reputed to have been the author. Public education often reflects secular humanistic worldview" principles they should follow? And how a Muslim counselor can deal with the conflict between the Islamic moral values and the non-Islamic codes of ethics?

principles they should follow? And how a Muslim counselor can deal with the conflict between the Islamic moral values and the non-Islamic codes of ethics?

As a Muslim psychology professional counselor, how can one solve the conflict between the non-Islamic principles of the code of ethics and the principles of the Islamic moral values?

#### **IV. Religious Philosophy of Counseling**

Philosophy of counseling can be a personal philosophy or a philosophy of an association or a group of professionals. One of

the definitions of personal philosophies is: a system of beliefs or values or a personal viewpoint.<sup>7</sup>

It expresses the principles that an individual psychological professional counselor or group of professional psychological counselors adhere to in their work. There are several types of philosophy of counseling. Some of them are secular in nature and others are based on religious principles.

The following example represents the religious model. It was selected as it is widely used in the Western countries where psychology counseling was developed and implemented. While in Eastern countries, the development of counseling is still in its early stages of development and most of the Arab and Muslim nations are following the Western schools of counseling without an effective cultural modification to suit and meet the Arabic and Muslim way of life.

### **a. Christian Philosophy of Counseling**

The philosophy of Christian counseling is the system of beliefs and values that are based on the teachings of Christianity according to the church that is followed whether it is Catholic or Protestant or other branch of churches.

According to Emerge Ministries Canada: A Christian Counseling Service, talking about the Christian objective of counseling,

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7 The Free Dictionary

*“The goal of counseling is not to give in to the demands of hurting people who are looking for a way to live their lives without God. Or, they may be seeking to find some way of having God involved in their lives in such a way that minimizes their pain. The purpose of problems I believe is not to use God to help us, but to use our problems to move us toward God.”*

This philosophy is a religious one as it is based on religious teachings in serving the clients who have faith in Christianity. It is based on the Holy Scripture as the basis for the Christian counseling. Its counseling believes in God according to their way. It is a counseling based on the way of life according to Christianity's faith and principles.

*“The Christian's standard for all matters of faith and practice.*

*“The Holy Scripture, being God's law and testimony, is true and should therefore serve as the Christian's standard for all matters of faith and practice (Isaiah 8:19-20; 2 Peter 1:3). There is no authority that is higher than the one found in Scripture ”.<sup>8</sup>*

The Christian counseling is a Christ-centered Counseling, which means that it focuses on the teachings of the Christian religion. It is a salvation-centered counseling, in a sense that the believers have to accept the Christ as Lord and savior of the

<sup>8</sup> Life- [Matters.ca](http://Matters.ca),2002

individuals' lives! It is a Bible-centered counseling. The Christian counseling is looking at man and his nature from the Bible's perspectives. This counseling attempts to solve human problems from the Bible perspectives.

It is a Church-centered counseling, which means that the counseling is using the church as a main instrument of this counseling.

The Christian philosophy of counseling is based on the teachings of Christianity not on some of the secular principles mixed with some Christian concepts. It depends on the Bible and its perspectives about human beings.

*"Christian counseling does not consist of taking secular concepts and adding some Christian terms to them. Rather biblically sound Christian counseling begins with the principles of God's holiness that was vindicated at the cross. It assumes that man is predisposed to sin by believing that his, and not God's way is the best. Good Christian counseling does not use the Bible as a psychology textbook. But it does assume that the Bible accurately defines man and diagnoses his condition "<sup>9</sup>*

Christian philosophy of counseling and the Christian moral values are the basis for the Christian code of ethics. Although the Christian counseling is religious in its basis and its code of ethics, this does not mean that it can be used by Muslim counselors with their Muslim clients. There are many differences that cannot be

<sup>9</sup> Life Matters.ca, 200

accepted either by the Muslim counselor or by the Muslim client. Muslim counselors working with Muslim clients have no choice but to consider and to be aware of their own moral values as Muslims. They cannot ignore their roots and principles of life based on their culture and moral values.

How about the philosophy of counseling from the Islamic perspectives? I am not going to write about it as we do not have that very much material in this area. To my knowledge, most of the literature of psychology counseling as well as most of the counselors are based on the Western secular schools of counseling. In fact, most of the professionals are still arguing about involving the Islamic thought in the psychology counseling.

I feel that it is sufficient at this point to talk about Islamic moral values as a basis for what might be a code of ethics for Muslim counselors in the future. It is very important for Muslim counselors to have a philosophy of counseling; a philosophy that will solve the dilemma of Muslim counselors in applying a code of ethics that is not based on the principles of the Muslim clients. The Islamic moral values are, in fact, based on the Islamic philosophy of life and the world point of view. It is based on the Islamic faith and principles.

As there are different philosophies of counseling, there are different moral values. The next discussion will be about the Western moral values followed by the Islamic values.

## b. Moral Values

### I. Western moral values

The second element that has a strong effect on the professional counselors' work and on their relationship with their clients is the principle of moral values. The counselors, like any other people have their own moral values and belief system that guides them in their conduct and behavior. So what is a moral value?

One of the definitions of this concept put it this way: the moral value is

*“The moral principles and beliefs of a person or group”* <sup>10</sup>

Or as defined by the dictionary .com. LLC,

*“Moral values are “Guiding senses of the requirements and obligations of right conduct.”* <sup>11</sup>

Moral values mean the rules or the standards of good behavior in particular. According to Wikipedia,

*“Moral values are things held to be right or wrong or desirable or undesirable”* <sup>12</sup>

One has to remember that moral values are related to the individual's culture. Each culture has its own moral values in

10 The Free Dictionary

11 Dictionary.com. LLC.2008

12 Wikipedia

general. It seems that culture and moral values are very strong in their connection and influence.

According to Michelle Maiese (2003) in his topic *Moral or Value Conflicts*, the culture has a strong influence on the moral values of its people. Since the moral values are part of each culture, one notices that each culture has its own moral values.

*“In many cases, culture has a powerful influence on the moral order. Because systems of meaning and ways of thinking differ from one culture to another, people from different cultures typically develop different ideas about morality and the best way to live. They often have different conceptions of moral authority, truth, and the nature of community.[13] For example, some cultures place great moral emphasis on the family, while others stress the importance of individual autonomy. These cultural differences become even more problematic when groups have radically different expectations about what is virtuous, what is right, and how to deal with moral conflicts.[14] Thus, culture wars are often driven by moral conflict.” 13*

The differences between cultures in the world can be seen in their different moral values and the way of life of each culture. In the time of globalization, people can know more about different cultures of the world and their different moral values and systems of beliefs. The differences of cultures and moral values can be seen in the different principles and philosophy of life between the secular philosophy and non-secular ones.

According to the Secular Humanist Declaration issued in 1980 by the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (now the Council of Secular Humanism).

13 Michelle Maiese (2003) Moral or Value Conflict

“Secular Humanism is a secular ethical philosophy that emphasizes a world view based upon naturalism: the belief that the physical world or nature is all that exists or is real. As such, it emphasizes scientific inquiry and rejects revealed knowledge as well as theistic morality. Secular Humanism is increasingly influential in politics, ethics and morals, as well as education”<sup>14</sup>

The main idea of this philosophy is that “the physical world or nature is all that exists or is real”. Based on this, “it rejects revealed knowledge as well as theistic morality (A morality that is based on Belief in the existence of a god)”

The secular philosophy has no place for any religion in its world views. It’s based on the belief that seculars are atheists and they are governed by the physical laws of the universe. They claim that they are not influenced by non-materials.

*“Followers of secular humanism typically describe themselves as atheists (without a belief in a god or very skeptical (doubtful) of the possibility) or agnostics (without knowledge of a god and uncertain of the possibility). The laws that govern the universe and mankind are the physical laws of the universe and are not influenced by non-material or supernatural beings such as gods, demons, or other spirits. The concept of a god that hears and answers prayers is unproven.... Secular Humanists do not accept as true the literal interpretations of the Old or New Testaments, nor other allegedly inspired books such as the Koran. God, ritual, and creed are all rejected. The divinity of Jesus, the missions of the prophets and saints must be rejected.”<sup>15</sup>*

14 the Secular Humanist Declaration issued in 1980

15 the Secular Humanist Declaration issued in 1980

Secular people have no place for any religion or knowledge based on revelations. According to this philosophy, human personality has no more dimensions other than the physical aspect. There is no place or consideration for the spiritual, the emotional, the intellectual or the social dimensions. Humans, according to this philosophy are just like any other animal no more!

*"The totality of the personality can be scientifically accounted for through the biological transactions of organisms in a social and cultural environment. Our influence on the future is comprised of the influences we have on our progeny السلالة and other members of our culture.<sup>16</sup>".*

What kind of moral values one expects from the secular philosophy of life? The following will show you how they see the moral values of life:

*"Secular Humanists, being free from supernaturalism, recognize that the values human beings hold are rooted in their human experiences and in their culture. Ethics are individualistic and situational. They stem from the human needs and interests. The major goals of secular humanism are happiness, the good life, individual and shared enjoyment of life, creative realization of human needs and desires, and the complete realization of the human potential and enrichment."<sup>17</sup>*

16 the Secular Humanist Declaration issued in 1980

17 the Secular Humanist Declaration issued in 1980

Moral values of the secular philosophy are individualistic and situational. They stem from human needs and interests. The secular moral values are based on the individual, the situation needs and the interest. Moral values have no continuity or any valid standard. What is considered good today might become an evil tomorrow basis of the individual's situation, needs and interest. Unfortunately, these moral values are predominant in today's world! On the other hand, there are moral values that are permanent and not based on the individual's situation or needs or interest; moral values that are based on the truth and on what is right and what is wrong either for all mankind or for an individual in particular. These are the Islamic moral values.

## II. Islamic Moral Values:

The core of Islam is the statement of declaration of that truth ***“There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”***

This statement summarizes the whole philosophy of life of a Muslim. Part of its meanings, as I see it, is to clean one's mind from all untrue beliefs or ideas (i.e. there is no god); this is what is called in Arabic تخلية, which means to clean and remove all untrue information or thinking from one's mind. When the whole mind is clean from all untrue ideas, the truth is to be placed in that place ***(but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”***

This statement implies that we accept what comes from Allah and His Messenger as a fact and act on it in our life. From this

truth a Muslim builds his or her moral values and then the code of ethics in the professional work related to a certain career.

I think, based on what I found out in my work (The Major Types of Human Personality in the Qur'an) that the Muslim moral values as well as the code of ethics should cover the five dimensions of human personalities. That includes the spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social dimensions. All these dimensions are the main elements of a human self that need to be taken care of in a balanced and practical way.

The Islamic moral values cover all these five dimensions in daily life. When people miss to understand these dimensions or neglect some of them, the individual finds himself or herself facing problems that require help. That help used to be given by parents, teachers or religious leaders. But with the development of societies and the way of life, professional psychology help became a necessity in our time.

If a person is to define Islam in just a one word, as one Muslim scholar was asked, that one word would be **the truth**. Truth means fact or reality and actuality. *The Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia connects the word truth to the good faith, honesty, and sincerity.

*“The meaning of the word **truth** extends from honesty, good faith, and sincerity in general, to agreement with fact or reality in particular.”*<sup>18</sup>

When one reads the Qur'anic verses with a deep understanding, he or she will find out that all these concepts are covered and explained beautifully. The Qur'an is the truth in all its content

18 Wikipedia

The true followers of the Qurán are honest people, with faith of pure sincerity towards God the Lord of the worlds and the Creator of everything that is seen or unseen by human eyes as well sincerity in all their deeds and actions.

The Qurán is the Book that makes the comprehensive philosophy of life for its followers and guides them in their actions on a daily basis.

*“Surely this Quran guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward.” (17:9)*

The Qur'an is the Book that was revealed to guide human beings to the best way of life and protect them from being astray or become wrongdoers to others or to themselves. Through the Qur'an, human beings can understand their destiny and have more knowledge about themselves and the world.

*“We will show them Our Signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own selves, until they clearly see that this is **the truth**. Does it not suffice that your Lord is watching over all things?” (41:53).19*

One has to remember that all Islamic moral values are based on the teachings of Islam both the theoretical and the practical ones.

### Al-Shahadah or Testimony of Faith

Islam is summarized in the testimony of faith, which is the basis for the whole Islamic system of life. The key to Islam and to the

19 Quran: The Eternal Truth □ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

right path in this life and in the life to come is for the individual to affirm his or her belief by declaring the shahadah or testimony of faith which is: " *I BEAR GOD BUTALLAH, AND I BEAR WITNESS THAT MUHAMMAD IS THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH.*"

This testimony or declaration is the main summary of the Islamic theoretical system. It includes the truth about Allah (swt) his Angels, Books, Messengers, the Hereafter or life after death and the belief in al-Qadar or Destiny, which means a predetermined course of events considered as something beyond human power, or control.<sup>20</sup> The statement of testimony or declaration contains the whole system of Islamic life with the individual's world views as stated by the Qur'an the Book of the truth. This Islamic theoretical system is followed by the practical system of life that is building and protecting individuals' and societies' moral values.

The practical Islamic system<sup>21</sup> is starting with the Salat or prayer that is to be performed on a daily basis from a certain age by both genders. The prayer action takes care of the Muslim's personality in all its dimensions. The spiritual dimension is strengthened by reciting the Qur'an, making Dua's, remembering Allah (swt) and seeking His help and forgiveness. Physically, it requires the cleanliness of the body as well as the heart. The actions of the prayer are a kind of physical exercise that is very helpful to the prayers. It is a compulsory exercise that takes care of the human body with the other dimensions. Emotionally, it is strengthening the love of

20 see Free Dictionary

21 In fact, even the *shahadah* or the testimony of faith is a practical one. But because it is based on the work of heart and the intention and requires no physical actions more than the announcement by the tongue it seems different from the other principles that require more work. Still the *shahadah* is the basis for all other pillars of Islam as it was mentioned earlier

Allah the Creator the Provider of life, rezq, knowledge, health, good family and peace in this life with mercy and forgiveness in the life to come. Moreover, when we pray in groups, we strengthen our relationship with our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Intellectually, when one prays, he or she has to read some verses of the Qur'an, which requires the reader to think about the meanings of the verses that he or she is reading. That thinking is part of the intellectual dimension in human personality.

Finally, the prayer is one of the Islamic practical instruments that builds and takes care of the social dimension in our personality

Praying with groups for five times a day with a pure heart will provide one with real friends who can help one another to do good things in a cooperation way in many other areas of life. Prayer is the best action that brings an individual to be aware of his or her God and to be grateful to Allah (swt) for all of His blessings. It connects this life to the life to come by reading the great Surah, the mother of the Book, Al-Fatiyah more than seventeen times a day.

**"All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds" Most Gracious, Most Merciful. You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help. Guide us in the right path. The path of those whom You blessed; not of those who have deserved wrath, nor of the strayers."**

Reciting these verses many times daily makes the Muslim philosophy of life and moral values very clear and strong. Reciting these verses with good understanding is an effective way that makes Muslims very positive, grateful, aware of their God and their duties toward Allah (swt) as well as towards others and towards themselves. Allah says about the prayers in the Qur'an:

“and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do.” (29:45)

We are mentioning the prayer just as an example to illustrate the importance of the moral values in the work of Muslim psychology counselors. It is not practical for counselors to ignore the principles of any culture when working with a client. For Muslim counselors as well as Muslim clients, the prayer is the most important and effective work that can guide an individual to be the best in his or actions in this life. It is to the advantage of the professional psychology counselors to be aware of this in working with Muslim clients individually or in groups.

The other pillars of Islam such as *al-Zakat* (almsgiving) or *al-Siyam* (fasting), or *al-Hajj* (pilgrimage), are serving similar objectives of taking care of the Muslim personality through the practical actions that are meant to purify and develop human personality to achieve its potentials in all of its dimensions. Although it seems that each pillar is emphasizing mainly on a certain dimension, but in general, all of the pillars work together to lead Muslims to be the best of human beings in all their dimensions. Due to the limited space and time, we would not elaborate further in this paper on these dimensions. It is sufficient to see how the prayer, as an example, is serving the aspects of human personality. And based on this, one can see how effective are the pillars of Islam and the teachings of Islam in helping psychology counselors in their noble work of helping clients to know themselves and grow in a healthy way based on their moral values and the noble teachings of Islam. The real help and real respect comes from the truth, the Islamic truth. The

relationship between faith and good behavior was emphasized by Dr Fawzia Qassim in her thesis completed in (2008) which says:

“the Qur'an and Sunnah both show a substantial link between faith and behavior, and there is a huge amount of evidence to support this. According to these sources, good external behavior is a result of goodness of inner behavior or of the heart. This applies to behavior towards the Creator, which is as manifested in the acts of worship- 20 as well as behavior towards human beings and other creatures.” 22

There is strong evidence of the importance of faith in establishing and strengthening the moral values that guide and lead humans to conduct their actions right and to be aware of the wrong doings that one has to avoid in his or her actions

### **Some Examples of Islamic Moral Values:**

Islam is emphasizing that there are basic human rights to all mankind. These human rights are ensured and guaranteed by Allah (swt) the Creator not by any human authority. Among these human rights are:

**1)** The Right to Life in Islam is the most important and the basis for all other rights. If one losses his or her life, then there is no meaning for other human rights! The Qur'an says:

“Anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people...”  
95:32) "Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except through the due process of law." (6:151)

22 Al-Amar, Fawzia Qassim. (2008)

**2) The second human right is the right to safety of life.**

"And whoever saves a life it is as though he had saved the lives of all mankind." (5:32)

**3) The third human right in Islam is the respect for the chastity of women.** The concept of chastity of women indicates the moral standard of Muslim women in having herself pure and loyal to her religion of not having any sexual contact outside of marriage. The Qur'an says:

"Do not approach (the bounds) of adultery" (17:32).

**4) The fourth human right in Islam is the right to a basic standard of life.** It is the responsibility of the Muslim Ummah as lead by its authorities to take care of all the people who are living under its rules regardless of their religion or race or color or gender.

"And in their wealth there is acknowledged right for the needy and destitute." (51:12).

This is beside the fifth pillar of Islam (al-Zakah) which is a compulsory and obligatory duty on every wealthy Muslim. Unfortunately, this right is neglected in many Muslim countries.

**5) The fifth human right in Islam is the individual rights to freedom.**

"Individual rights state formally the incontrovertible fact that no other person or institution has *rightful* claim over the person or property of another. Justice (also known as equity) is nothing more or less than *the legal recognition of each and every individual's right to her own life and her own property*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term "rights," in part, as "A justifiable claim, on legal or moral grounds, to have or obtain something, or to act in a certain way."

Rights are a formal codification of human freedom. Freedom is first and foremost the absence of compulsion. The primary thing that distinguishes the free person from the unfree person is voluntary action versus action that is compelled”<sup>23</sup>

The worst kind of injustice against an individual is to become a slave to another human being. Islam the religion of freedom, since the beginning of its dawn, made the rules to free slaves after considering the action of enslaving people as the worst action a person can take. The Prophet, the one who freed man from all kind of slavery (pbuh) said:

“There are three categories of people against whom I shall myself be a plaintiff (a person who brings an action in a court of law) on the Day of Judgment; Of these three categories, is the one who enslaves a free man, then sells him and eats this money” (*Bukhari and Ibn Maja*).

**6) The right to justice** is the sixth human rights in Islam. The concept of Justice include the upholding of what is just, fair treatment and due reward in accordance with honor, and right standards or law and principles. In the Qur'an Allah says:

“Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful.” (16:90)

Justice is not only required with friends and people whom you know and like. Islamic justice is for all human beings. In fact, it is required even with animals and with the environment, The Qur'an says

23 The -thinking man .com. 2008

"Do not be provoked into aggression by your hatred of people who once prevented you from going to the Sacred Masjid. "(5:3)

"O you who believe, you shall be absolutely equitable, and observe God, when you serve as witnesses. Do not be provoked by your conflicts with some people into committing injustice. You shall be equitable, for it is righteous. You shall observe God..." surely God is Aware of what you do (5:

"You who believe stand steadfast before Allah as witness for (truth and) fair play" (4:135).

Islamic justice in a Muslim community is meant for all mankind regardless of their religion or race or color.

7) The seventh human right in **Islam is the equality of human beings**. All human beings, in fact, are brothers and sisters; they share of being children of one family. The Qur'an says:

"O mankind, we have created you from a male and female and we set you up as nations and tribes so that you may be able to recognize each other."Indeed, the noblest among you before Allah are the most heedful of you" (49:13).

8) The eighth right of human rights in Islam is the **right to co-operate and not to cooperate**. Cooperation is advisable when it is for helping one another in doing what is good for all.

"Co-operate with one another for virtue and heedfulness and do not co-operate with one another for the purpose of vice and aggression" (5:2)

Among the most important moral values of Muslims is the sincerity in every action they do or take. It is the core character in the faith it self as well as worship and general behavior. The truthfulness with

Allah (swt) is the second character of a Muslim. It is mentioned in the Hadith:

“Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person...” [Agreed upon] A Muslim must have trust in Allah (tawakkul). The Qur'an says:

“and in Allah let the believers put their trust.” (9:51) According to Hawwa (no date)

“Trust in Allah consists of knowledge, circumstances, and action. The circumstance is the constituent **(أساسي عنصر)** of true reliance of Allah, knowledge is its origin, and action is its fruit.”<sup>24</sup>

Love for Allah (swt) is the corner stone of faith. The Qur'an says:

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (3:31)

“Surely, those who believe and lead a righteous life, the Most Gracious will shower them with love

“**إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَدَارِي**” (19:96)

Love of Allah (swt) and His Messenger is the basis for loving parents, family members, children, brothers and sisters of faith, brothers and sisters in humanity, animals, environment and loving all the creations of Allah (swt).

Psychology professional Muslim counselors must be aware of their moral values as well as their client's moral values in order to be successful in their professional work. It is not possible to mention all kinds of Islamic values that can be helpful for counselors in this paper.

24 Hawwa, Sa'eed. Selected Writings on Purifying the Soul. Cairo: Dar Al-Salam p.398

I am sure that all Muslim counselors are aware of these values and share with me how important they are for both counselors and for clients. Before moving to discuss the code of ethics, it is important to mention the point of discussing moral values between the counselor and clients. Is it acceptable from the counselor to discuss moral values with his or her client and to tell about his or her own moral values? Although there are different point views about this, I prefer the view mentioned by C. Patterson (1989) in his work: Values in Counseling and Psychotherapy, which says:

“The counselor should not impose his or her values on clients, but this does not mean that the therapist should refuse to discuss values, ethics, or philosophy. Nor does it mean that the therapist may not, at times, express his or her values. The therapist may do so at the request of the client. In addition, there may be times when the therapist thinks it is necessary or desirable for the client to be aware of these values, or time in which the client should know how the therapist stands on certain ethical issues.”<sup>25</sup>

No counselor has the right to impose his or her values on clients. We know from the Qur'an, that faith, which is the most important decision in any individual's life, cannot be imposed on any individual. Then how can counselors, who are supposed to be helpers, behave as dictators by imposing their values. It is against being honest and genuine counselors. To protect clients from some actions like this, the code of ethics was established.

25 C.H .Paterson.( 1989)

**c. Code of Ethics:**

Talking about the code of ethics means discussing the moral judgment and the standards of behavior or conduct in a professional setting or association. Code of ethics was defined by different associations to fit the mission and objectives of each one. It was defined by Dictionary of Business Terms as:

“Code of ethics is a Statement of principles concerning the behavior of those who subscribe to the code. A code of ethics defines proper professional behavior and practices that are considered unbecoming a person in that profession”<sup>26</sup>

The Dictionary of Banking Terms is emphasizing in its definition on the techniques of the conduct instead of the principles which was the focus of the first definition. Code of ethics according to Dictionary of Business Terms means the

“Rules and procedures of professional conduct”<sup>27</sup>

If one looks at the Real States dictionary definition, one will find it similar to the first one concentrating on the principles of the behavior of the people applying the code of ethics. Here the code of ethics is a statement of principles explaining the conduct of the people who are using that code.

“The code of ethics is a statement of principles, concerning the behavior of those who subscribe to the code.”<sup>28</sup>

26 Dictionary of Business Terms

27 Dictionary of Banking Terms

28 Dictionary of Real Estate Terms

The previous definitions are emphasizing the (proper professional behavior) following the rules and behaving according to the principles of the professional conduct. According to the "Code of Ethics Law & Legal Definition, the code of ethics:

"Is a set of principles of conduct within an organization that guides decision making and behavior? The purpose of the code is to provide members and other interested persons with guidelines for making ethical choices in the conduct of their work. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of many employees' credibility. Member of an organization adopts a code of ethics to share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the organization's principles and standards of practice."

Some of the questions that might face Muslim psycholog professional counselors are:

- 1) How to follow the code of ethics without conflicting with the Islamic moral values?
- 2) How to help our clients without going against their moral values principle?

Psychological counselors in general and Muslims in particular understand that the basics of the Western code of ethics are different from the foundations of the Muslim moral values. Regardless of the many similarities between the two ethics, there are differences that no counselor can ignore when dealing with certain human problems.

This paper will discuss the basic principles of the Western code of ethics in psychological counseling as well as the basic principles of Islamic moral values...

The American Counseling Association is the most active and reputable professional association in the field of counseling. It is appropriate to take it as an example in discussing the main elements of professional ethics. Due to the fact that codes of ethics are

established from the culture and philosophy of its members in a certain society, it is normal to see clear differences among many codes related to their principles of being secular or religious. Even among each group of people there are differences. Not all seculars are sharing the same principles and likewise the religious groups.

In any code of ethics, the elements of the code include the statement of belief, rules that did not allow certain actions and require other actions, rationale and illustrations as well as guidelines for decision-making at time of ethical problems.<sup>29</sup>

The mission of the ACA is to improve the life satisfaction or the degree of well being that is felt by individuals or a community in a society. The following is the mission as stated by the association in 2005:

“The mission of the American Counseling Association is to enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors, advancing the counseling profession, and using the profession and practice of counseling to promote respect for human dignity and diversity”

There are two key words in this mission that are mentioned by all the codes of ethics regardless of their differences these words are: human dignity and diversity. The meaning of human dignity as published on Wikipedia refers to being worthy of honor and respect.

**“Human dignity** refers to a state of righteousness, integrity, or virtue in human beings. The term *dignity* is defined as "the state of being worthy of honor or respect”

29 see Codes of Ethics and Conduct in Revenue Administrations: What does International Practice Tell Us A Study Produced by the World Bank Tax Policy and Tax Administration Thematic Group

A Muslim knows from the Qura'n that human beings were honored by the Creator when he or she reads the verse that says:

“We have honored the children of Adam, and provided them with rides on land and in the sea. We provided for them good provisions, and we gave them greater advantages than many of our creatures” (17:70)

This is an honor to all human beings regardless of their faith or behavior. It is an honor that cannot be denied by anyone who understands and uses his or her mind with a conscience heart.

The second word that is very important in this paper is diversity. Which means as was defined by ASUO –multicultural Advocate's Home Page to include all races, genders, ages, religious beliefs and political orientation. Most of the ideas included in this wide concept are acceptable by the majority of people but some are not agreed upon. For instance, the sexual orientation which means: the direction of one's sexual interest toward members of the same, opposite, or both sexes is not acceptable by all religions.

In fact, this is one of the areas of conflicts that a Muslim counselor has to deal with in his or her professional work.

“The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual”<sup>30</sup>

30 ASUO-Multicultural Advocate's Home Page

This definition reminds us of the Qur'anic verse which says: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another."<sup>31</sup> Based on this verse, human beings were created from one self and have been made tribes and nations in order to know one another. Knowing one another is the cornerstone that leads to understanding, respect, and cooperation. The fact of having different nations with different cultures, languages even moral values is a strong reminder to all humans emphasizing that diversity is part of human life. The ACA Code of Ethics is based on five basic purposes covering the nature of the ethical responsibility, the principles that define ethical behavior and the basis for processing of ethical complaints against counselors who are members of the association. The ACA code of ethics is made of the following basic sections: The Counseling Relationship, Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy, Professional Responsibility, Evaluation, Assessment, and Interoperation, Supervision, Training and Teaching, Research and Publication and Resolving Ethical Issues. These sections are the practical actions or the implementation of the following five principles of the code of ethics that works as general guidelines to the eight sections. The principles of the code of ethics are very similar in their meanings to the many Islamic principles mentioned in the Qur'an and the Hadith. Yet these similarities do not make these principles Islamic.

31 The Qur'an (49:13)

This is because the basic roots and the ultimate goals of the conduct are different.

The Islamic principles are based on the Islamic faith in believing in Allah (swt) as the Only God. As a result of that, the behavior of the individuals based on them is an action of worship which is required by the relationship between the Creator and His servants. However, the ACA principles of ethics are rules based on the secular philosophy which has no faith in anything outside of the materialistic world.

### **I. Principles of the code of ethics:**

The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct are very similar to the principles of moral values. They are meant to “guide and inspire psychologists toward the very highest ethical ideals of the profession.” The principles were summarized in the following five principles:

- A. Beneficence and Non-malfeasance
- B. Fidelity and Responsibility
- C. Integrity
- D. Justice
- E. Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

**A. Beneficence and non-malfeasance** or the ethical responsibility to do good and the duty to do no harm. This principle is meant to benefit the clients by taking care of them. This is the duty of every psychology counselor to safeguard the rights of their Clients

**B. The second principle which is fidelity and responsibility** means that the counselors have to build a relationship with their clients

based on trust and Faithfulness to obligations, duties, the act or practice of observing or complying with a law, and custom. A psychology counselor must be aware of his or her professional responsibility toward clients as well as society.

C. The third principle is **integrity or honesty** which means that the psychology professional counselor is honest, truthful. This means that he or she is a person who is very far from cheating or stealing or doing any kind of misconduct.

D. The fourth principle is **justice or fairness**. The psychology professional counselor is expected to treat his or her clients fairly, and with full appreciation. That will cover all the process and services conducted by the professional counselor.

E. The fifth principle is about the respect of the client's rights and his or her state of being equal and worthy or honor and respect. The client as an individual has the rights to privacy self-determination as well as confidentiality. His or her conversation must be protected and never disclosed without his or her permission. There would be no meaning to the job of the psychology counseling professional if the client was not respected and treated with all the required understanding and appreciation. This is also required by all the educators who deal with students. In fact, this respect is the basis for any relationship, professional or non-professional. There will be no real healthy relationship between family members, workers, or professional groups without a very high standard of respect and appreciation.

## II. Muslim Counselors and Ethical Dilemmas - Three Examples:

When a professional psychology counselor finds himself or her self facing a problem of deciding on one of two choices, this is what is meant by an ethical dilemma in this paper. As a professional psychology counselor has an obligation to the code of ethics and as a Muslim has an obligation to the Islamic moral values and ethics. This situation can be faced by any professional counselor who has moral values that is different with all or with some principles of the code of ethics principles and rules.

In the following three examples, a Muslim professional psychology counselor might have to face an ethical dilemma.

1. Confidentiality
2. Dual relationships or ( conflict of interest) and
3. Working with Homosexuals and Lesbians.

### 1) Confidentiality: (السرية أو الخصوصية):

Among psychology counseling topics confidentiality is the most important one to be understood and explained in details between the counselor and clients. Both the counselor and client have to be aware of the concept and the role of confidentiality in order to build the necessary trust and confidence.

The concept of confidentiality as defined by Scott Sinay (2002) is concerned with having the discussion between the counselor and client safe and not to be disclosed to anyone.

“Confidentiality is defined as the protection of all the information that goes on in a counseling session between the counselor and client (Hackney, 2000). This information can be in the form of client records, verbal communication between the counselor, and a client themselves. This is also a salutary promise to the client by the

counselor. A counselor also has to be aware of other definitions of confidentiality such as privileged communication.” 32

This definition of confidentiality is covering all the information between the counselor and the client regardless if it was verbal or recorded. In order to make the definition very clear, the confidential communication or the privileged communication was included. That means any information or statements given by a client to his or her counselor cannot be disclosed without the consent of the clients himself or herself. For a client to be qualified for privileged status, the conversation between him or her and the counselor must be in a confidential place. If the information was given to a third person, the privilege is lost from the client.

Confidentiality is the most important part of the code of ethics and plays the main role in protecting clients. The information given to the professional counselor or any other professional person such as lawyers, doctors, etc, is a privilege held by the client as stated by The 'Lectric Law Library's Lexicon On:

“These privileges are held by the client (but not the lawyer) the patient (but not the doctor or psychotherapist), the speaking (but not the spoken-to) spouse and both the clergyperson and the penitent. The lawyer, doctor, psychotherapist and spoken-to spouse, however, cannot reveal the communication without the other person's consent. The client, patient, speaking spouse, clergy person and penitent may waive the privilege (that is, testify about the conversation) and also may prevent the other person from disclosing the information.”

A professional counselor must remember that the client is the one who has the right for his or her information to be protected and cannot be disclosed unless the permission was given by him or her.

32 Scott Sinay (2002) confidentiality

As a Muslim counselor, if you were to deal with this case what will you do knowing the Islamic principle in a similar situation. This is an example of one ethical dilemma that you might have to deal with it. In this example of confidentiality dilemma, a counselor has to deal with a very complicated and sensitive issue. It reminds counselors of the importance of making clients aware of the ethical limitations and the concept of confidentiality in the counseling relationship. Having this done at the early stage can help in dealing with a dilemma like this.

“The nature of this situation highlights the importance of providing clients with clear information regarding ethical boundaries and confidentiality early in the counseling relationship so as to minimize difficulties and misunderstandings”<sup>33</sup>

Confidentiality in counseling is a basic principle to protect the client’s information, dignity and rights. But how about when the client based on his or her statement is going to hurt him or herself?

Or when the client is stating that he or she will hurt someone else?

What should a psychology counselor do if a court of law requests the records of the client? What will you do if the client based on what he or she said to you is in danger?

I still remember, when my supervisor was counseling a client, and I was counseling some students in another room, and we heard an ambulance coming to take that student client to hospital. The counselor made the call for an ambulance because she learned that the girl was planning to kill herself that night (suicide).

This was an action by a professional psychology counselor. It was taken without disclosing the confidentiality of the client. The goal

33 Counseling Dilemma eBook – Australian Institute of Professional Counseling.

was to save the life of a client who is planning to finish her life as she could not deal with her emotional problem. When a person feels lonely in his or her handling of certain problems, if that person is not so strong to face the challenge or the dilemma, then an urgent help is needed to support that person and save his or her life.

## 2) Dual relationships or (conflict of interest)

The concept of the term dual relationship means that the counselor or any other professional individual plays two roles one of them is a professional one and the other one is social. According to Charles L. Arnold and Pamela Johnston (2006):

“a dual relationship exists when, in addition to the professional relationship, there is some other relationship with the individual: friend, family member, student or business partner.”<sup>34</sup>

Sometimes dual relationships or conflict of interest is called boundary violations or boundary crossing. The first one is unethical and very harmful to the professional relationship between the psychology counselor and the client. This kind of relation takes place when the professional helper takes advantages of his or her client. Or as was explained by Ofer Zur (2008):

“Harmful boundary violations occur typically when therapists and patients are engaged in exploitative (unethically) dual relationships, such as sexual contacts with current clients.”<sup>35</sup>

Dual relationship in a Muslim society where people are very sociable and strong in their care about one another is a sensitive issue. How can a Muslim professional psychology counselor make a line between his or her professional duty and the other duties of being a member of a Muslim society is the real issue?

34 Charles L. Arnold & Pamela Johnston (2006) Ethical Issues Involving Dual Relationships for Fiduciaries.

35 Ofer Zur (2008):

In this paper, I am just mentioning this as one of the three examples that a Muslim counselor have to be aware of during his or her work in order to avoid any mix between the tow roles of being a professional counselor and a member of a Muslim society.

### 3) Working with Homosexuals and Lesbians

In fact, in the Arabic and Islamic culture one find it so embarrassing even to talk about such behavior. It is an acceptable action by an Arabic and Muslim society as far as I know. But this does not mean that a Muslim society is free from this behavior. I remember in 1991 when I was discussing my proposal for my study at the UKM in Malaysia, that one of my colleagues was making her Master proposal about homosexuality among UKM students. After the discussion wad completed, I asked her: how can you collect the data? And who will tell you about his sexual orientation and behavior? The student told me: it is not that difficult. It seems that the culture of globalization is changing many concepts. Even the concept of homosexuality is treated defiantly since 1973 as use to be considered a mental disorder. Now in 2009, the people who behave in this way became a group with an official rights .and if you as a Muslim counselor were to work in a country where this behavior is legal, you cannot refuse to work with them without even telling your moral values about that. If you do not accept them and accept their rights, you will lose your license as a professional psychology counselor!! According to the encyclopedia of Psychology in its discussion of this term,

“For most of history, open discussions about homosexuality□sexual attraction to people of one's own gender have been taboo. Men and women with a homosexual orientation are referred to as gay, while the term lesbian refers to women only. Homosexuality was classified

as a mental disorder until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Two decades later, bias and discrimination against gays and lesbians still exists, but sexual orientation is discussed more openly."<sup>36</sup>

This is the view of the west about the homosexuality and lesbian group. From the Islamic perspective, we know that this behavior is **forbidden** and **haram**. All Muslim with a minimum education know that and understand it. So I do not think that I need to mention the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadiths as well as the views about it as there is no need and I have no more space for it.

What is important about this part of the paper is how a Muslim psychology counselor can work with clients who are involved in such an action? The Islamic moral values are against it as a sin, an ethical and against *the fitrah* or nature. We know from our Islamic teachings that the religion is sincere advice. A real advice is the one that tells the client the truth not to agree with him as long as he is happy with his behavior. If your client is behaving wrongly and you know that his behavior or her behavior is not right according to your and your client moral values, then what you should do?

According to Basheer Ahmed in his topic: Islamic values and ethics in prevention and treatment of emotional disorder,

"Psychotherapy is in reality a form of education which directs the patient to recognize his behavior, to conform to prevailing standards and to help in improving the patient to adapt the alternate ways of behavior. Muslim psychiatrists and psychotherapists

36 Encyclopedia of Psychology

must have familiarity with Islamic religion and culture and must incorporate Islamic values, ethics and code of behavior in techniques of psychotherapy. Many patients suffering from emotional disorders have lost the ability to lead responsible lives. For them therapeutic guidance in an environment of care, respect, dignity and understanding is necessary. The goal of therapy need not be happiness but acceptance of reality and strengthening the coping mechanisms. A trustful relationship with therapist, a clarification of problem and conflict, influences the positive outcome. Moral and ethical issues should not be avoided and problems should be clarified so that patient can judge for himself the quality of his behavior and his ideals”<sup>37</sup>

If psychology professional counseling is a form of education which directs the client to recognize his behavior and a counselor “must incorporate Islamic values, ethics, and code of behavior in techniques “as it was mentioned in the article, then the best way for a Muslim counselor to do this is to be role model in his or her relationship with clients as well as in setting counseling goals. The process of counseling can be an example for the values of the counselor. It is appropriate to borrow what C. Rogers said in the relationship between counselors and clients in order to make the counseling effective.

The psychology professional counseling “Must have three very special qualities:

- a) Congruence, which means genuineness, honesty with the client.
- b) Empathy, which means the ability to feel what the client feels, and
- c) Respect, which means acceptance, unconditional positive regard towards the client.”<sup>38</sup>

37 Basheer Ahmed .Islamic values and ethics in prevention and treatment of emotional disorder.

38 C. George Boeree. 2006

In fact, a Muslim psychology professional counselor can make these qualities more meaningful by living his or her Islamic moral values which are based on the real sincerity and honesty and love for the humanity as brothers and sisters.

There are two cases at the end of this paper under appendix 2 and 3. How can you as a psychology professional Muslim counselor deal with these three cases if you were to be their counselor?

The first case is an example to the confidentiality dilemma when a counselor meets clients like this case. I am mentioning these as an example to the ethics dilemmas that a Muslim counselor has to deal with. It is a challenge to all of us when facing clients with similar problems. How to be a real helper requires skills, truthfulness, and honesty with our clients to know themselves and to be real human with a high standard of moral values.

### **Conclusion:**

Due to the social and economical development in the Arab and the Islamic world, the service of psychology professional counseling becomes an urgent necessity to meet the needs of our educational institutions, families and society in general. In order to make the psychology counseling an affective in meeting the needs of our countries, it is important to reconsider the philosophy of our psychology counseling as well as its moral values and the code of ethics. It is not fare as well as not practical, for our psychology counselors to implement the principles and rules of philosophy, moral values and code of ethics that was developed and implemented in different cultures and world point of views, which are in great conflict with Muslim cultures and principles

The psychology professional counseling as a helping service, considers the code of ethics the cornerstone of its function. At the

same time, the code of ethics of any service or profession is based on the philosophy of the members of that profession which states the foundation and principles of that philosophy to serve as a guideline to the practical conduct of its members. Both the philosophy of counseling and the moral value of the society members are the main sources of any code of ethics.

I hope that this conference will lead to the establishment of an Islamic code of ethics based on an Islamic philosophy of counseling as well as on our moral values. This is not an option; it is an urgent need to solve the problem of Muslim counselors in relying on Non-Islamic code of ethics. By establishing an Islamic code of ethics, a psychology professional Muslim counselor will have no dilemma in his or her work in dealing with certain issues such as confidentiality, dual relationship and counseling specific groups.

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## Appendix

### Case 1: "A Complex Family Situation"

You have been counseling a married couple for several weeks. The couple came to you because of problems they were having in their relationship. During the process you have seen the pair separately at which time you learnt that the husband is only staying with his wife because of their two children. The wife meanwhile has confided to you that her husband is not the biological father of one of the children. If you were confronted with this dilemma how would you deal with this couple?

There are several issues for consideration in this scenario. Firstly, the wife has confided that she is hiding the true paternity of one of the children from her husband and secondly, the husband has disclosed that he is only staying in the relationship for the sake of the children. As a counselor I am bound by confidentiality, however, I would find it somewhat compromising to counsel the husband and wife, either separately or together, for any length of time whilst this information was being withheld. Regardless of the ethical obligations I have as a counselor to maintain confidentiality, should the husband become aware of the true paternity of one of the children, he may feel betrayed by me as I have withheld this information from him.

Although this would only be one of the consequences for the husband on being informed, it may directly affect the counseling relationship thus further complicating his own situation. My approach would be to talk with the wife individually, emphasizing her responsibility for the information she holds and how she wishes to deal with it. I would encourage her to explore the pros and cons of either:

- Informing her husband of the true paternity of one of the children.
- Withholding the true paternity of one of the children from her husband either

temporarily or permanently.

I would also see the husband individually in order to work through the relational issues he has and examine the alternative courses of action available to him. I would then assess how the sessions to date may have affected the current situation and make a decision whether I could continue to work with the couple objectively whilst withholding critical information. The nature of this situation highlights the importance of providing clients with clear information regarding ethical boundaries and confidentiality early in the counseling relationship so as to minimize difficulties and misunderstandings.

Ethical decisions inherently involve issues concerning our definition of what is 'acceptable' human behavior. However, the definition of what constitutes 'acceptable' is neither universal nor static, but is ever changing and evolving in a melting pot of diversity, culture, gender and nationality.

Without doubt, our sense of what is right or wrong has been influenced by our environmental and social context and our inherited traits the unique combination of our individual identity.

There are two major theoretical perspectives we might consider Teleology and Deontology. The main teleological theory, Utilitarianism, judges actions as good or bad, right or wrong, on the basis of the consequences they produce. Deontology, on the other hand, is concerned with 'duty' and the fact that some acts are obligatory regardless of their consequences. Ethics, unlike legislation that requires an act to have occurred, is concerned with the prevention of damage or prescribing a course of action. Fortunately, there are signposts in the 'minefield' of ethical dilemmas, one of these signposts 'Professional Codes of Ethics' serves to guide us through

decisions in our professional lives involving issues of honesty, fairness and justice .

### **Background**

In the scenario above, all three people, wife (W), husband (H), and the counselor (C) are presented with an ethical dilemma.

In his decision to stay 'for the sake of the children' H has taken a utilitarian ethical stance on this issue, that is, H is making his decision to stay based on his desire for a particular outcome i.e. 'for the sake of the children'. In aligning himself this way, H is using the relationship with his wife as a means to get his desired end. His goals for the relationship have changed from being in a marriage with W to fulfilling his parental responsibilities until his sons are able to look after themselves. W's contribution to childraising is the utility upon which he can fulfill his parental obligations. H's ethical dilemma is whether it is fair and just to stay in the relationship with W without revealing to her what his new goals are and how he honestly feels about their relationship. W too, has been setting future goals alongside H in joint counseling sessions to improve her relationship with her partner. Her reluctance to tell H that he is not the biological father of one of the children may also be based on a utilitarian ethical stance □ perhaps fear of the emotional trauma that would most likely follow disclosure, and the possibility of H deciding to end their marriage, is holding W back from disclosure.

Like H, W is using her husband to maintain a secure family environment for herself and her children. Alternatively, if both H & W decided to adopt a deontological ethical stance in this dilemma, both would feel 'duty bound' to disclose their information to each other irrespective of the effects on their relationship.

The fact that H and W have decided to disclose their information to C indicates that as counseling sessions have progressed it has become increasingly difficult for them to withhold this information from each other. Thus, the ethical dilemma presented to W and H is about whether to be totally honest with each other and face the consequences, or to continue their deception irrespective of the potential negative effect this may have on the future of their relationship. And what of C's ethical considerations in this case?

C's dilemma is primarily concerned with professional accountability to self and to W & H. In accordance with the ACA Code of Ethics counselors must at all times: Establish the helping relationship in order to maintain the integrity and empowerment of the client without offering advice. Offer a promise of confidentiality and explain the limits of duty of care. Thus, it is neither C's role to advise the clients to reveal this information to each other nor to breach confidentiality and disclose to either client.

The primary role of a counselor is to facilitate the exploration of issues by encouraging clients to determine their own outcomes. To unduly influence or direct either H or W into prematurely making their revelations to each other would be a misuse of C's position, an imposition of C's values onto the clients and a breach of the Professional Code of Ethics.

On the other hand, C can use feedback and influencing skills to highlight some discrepancies in W & H thoughts, actions and feelings. For example, with regard to their stated desire to improve their relationship through counseling, C can explore individually with H & W, the potential impact of non-disclosure on the future stability of the relationship. Certainly, C is now in the unenviable (and powerful) position of being the only one in this triangle (H, W & C)

who is privy to information from both partners that could significantly affect the course of this couple's relationship. Having acknowledged this, C needs to evaluate the effectiveness of continuing to counsel this couple either on an individual or joint basis. For example, how will C encourage this couple to explore issues and set joint goals for the future knowing that H is not committed to the relationship? And that W is withholding information from H that he may deem crucial to his ongoing commitment?

Who came to counseling first? Was it H or W, or did they come together? If W came first, then should she be retained as a client if C decides against counseling the couple together? In all aspects of working with people, it is imperative that C is aware of any legal implications that may result from a particular course of action, in this instance the rights of the child to know his biological parents. Apart from the more obvious emotional and psychological needs, the child's future medical requirements may require immediate knowledge of his blood and tissue types.

Does C's duty of care extend to protecting the rights of this child, who, while not in immediate danger, may become so in a medical emergency? The very fact that W & H have requested to see C on an individual basis and that each has voluntarily made a significant disclosure directly relevant to their relationship, must surely indicate more commitment to and potential for, the relationship that might at first have been apparent. Does this new information, handled in a sensitive, responsible and constructive manner, have the potential to resurrect this relationship rather than bury it? C would need to consider whether to continue counseling the couple under supervision, or refer either (or both) to a more experienced relationship counselor. Liz Jeffrey, BSSc.

**Case 2: The gay Muslim marriage in Tanzania!**

Homosexuality is illegal in Tanzania, as indeed it is on most of the continent, bar the republic of South Africa where gay rights are enshrined in the constitution. This, however, was no bar to two gay Tanzanian Muslims, Mohammed Issa and Abdulrahman Juma who exchanged rings and were married in a public ceremony, covered by the local media in March.

According to Issa, their very public wedding was a sign of defiance against the Catholic Church, which together with Islam; make up Tanzania's main religious groups. It all began when, during a mass wedding for 600 Catholic heterosexual couples, the leader of the Catholic community in Tanzania, Archbishop Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, launched an attack on homosexuality, describing it as "one of the most heinous sins on earth". Said the Archbishop: "God said people should bear children to fill the world. How can a sexual relationship between two men, or two women for that matter, fill the world? This is absurd". Issa says he and Juma had planned to get married later in the year, "but we hurriedly wedded because of the nasty words uttered by the Archbishop. We just wanted to rubbish his words. "Issa, known also as Auntie Muddy, has been reported in the Tanzanian press as having warned that he and other gays in Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian seaside capital city of three million inhabitants, might feel pushed to hold a gay rights demonstration if the church continues in its condemnation of gays

**Case 3: The Indian Muslim looking for a Lesbian girl for marriage!**

NEW YORK-On a Web site for gay South Asians, 27-year-old Syed Mansoor uploaded the following message last summer:

"Hi, I am looking for a lesbian girl for marriage. I am gay but I would like to get married because of pressure from parents and society. I

would like this marriage to be a 'normal' marriage except for the sex part, please don't expect any sexual relationship from me."

"Being an Indian gay person, I believe it is so much worth it to give up sex and have a nice otherwise normal family. We can be good friends and don't have to repent all our life for being gay/lesbian."

Across the globe and especially in America, hundreds of other gay Muslims have started to pursue marriages of convenience or MOC, as they are known in which gay Muslims seek out lesbian Muslims, and vice versa, for appearances sake.

Mansoor works as an accountant and is a devout Muslim. He strictly abstains from drinking alcohol or eating pork and is particular about offering early morning prayers.

To his friends on Wall Street, he is a financial whiz; to his parents, a devoted son. But Mansoor is also part of a burgeoning trend of gay Muslims adopting marriages of convenience.

Hard statistics on the trend are hard to come by, but on a single Web site for South Asian gays and lesbians seeking such marriages, almost 400 requests had been uploaded. They ranged from a desperate plea from Atlanta "I just finished medical school, and the pressure for me to get married is becoming ridiculous. I can't have a conversation with my parents without them pressuring me" to a straightforward one from Texas:

"I will not object to her having sex with other women."

Mansoor credits the Internet for making these marriages a real possibility for gay Muslims. Gay activists agree, and say that in recent years, they have seen a rise in such marriages among Muslims.

Jack Fertig, a co-coordinator for Al Fatiha, a national advocacy group for gay Muslims, says he comes across at least one such e-mail request every month.

"It's obvious that this is becoming a viable option," he said. "People are seeking, looking and trying to make connections that could develop into such marriages."

Other activists say gay Muslims are resorting to these unions for reasons of selfpreservation.

"Marriages of convenience are the result of gay Muslims wanting to avoid emotional and physical harm to themselves," says Muhammed Ali, a board member of Homan, a Los Angeles-based support group for gay Iranians. Homosexuality is a crime punishable by death in much of the Islamic world. In Iran last year, two gay teenagers were publicly executed, while in Afghanistan, the Taliban government would torture homosexuals by collapsing walls on them.