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**WHAT FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT IN HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELLORS'
ENGAGEMENT WITH MUSLIM STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES?**

**A thesis presented for the partial fulfilment for the requirements of
Master of Educational Psychology**

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory study investigated the perceptions of high school counsellors of their knowledge about Muslim culture and practices and the methods that could be used to improve counselling services for Muslim students. Muslims are the most rapidly growing religious group in New Zealand and comprise approximately 1% of the population. School counsellors play an important role in helping Muslim students integrate into New Zealand society. The research used a focus group approach to collect data from counsellors at two schools in Auckland in two focus group sessions. The data from the focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the themes and patterns discussed by the focus group participants. The findings of the study identified the types of knowledge that school counsellors are seeking about their Muslim students. Some of the main areas of perceived needs were specific cultural knowledge about the countries of origin of Muslim students, information about refugee Muslims, and greater understanding of Muslim culture to understand intergenerational conflict. The findings also indicated that counsellors were seeking specific skills they believed would help them provide more effective counselling services to Muslim students. Some of the skills were methods for dealing with personal beliefs about Muslims, methods to help students mediate between traditional Muslim culture and New Zealand culture, and approaches to culturally appropriate interactions with family members. The findings of the study also identified various methods to assist school counsellors in obtaining knowledge about Muslims and applying culturally appropriate skills with Muslim students. Some of these methods included continuing education, contact with the Muslim community, and adaptation of the ka awatea model of Māori student success for use with Muslim students.

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