

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**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**

**Massey University, Albany, New Zealand**

**Mitra Hossain  
2015**

## **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.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are a number of people I would like to acknowledge who have helped me in one way or another to complete my Master's thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank both of my supervisors, Dr. Jeanette Berman and Professor Tom Nicholson. I feel privileged to have both of you as my academic supervisors. I am greatly thankful for your guidance and expertise. I would like to thank my family who have supported and encouraged me throughout these years, particularly my parents who instilled in me the value of pursuing higher education. Thank you to Barbara Browne who saw the potential value of my research. I would especially like to thank all the high school counsellors who took the time and effort to participate in this research. I'm truly grateful for everyone's support and contribution. Finally, I would like to say that I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to conduct this research and contribute to this field. I sincerely hope that my research findings will make a difference to the lives of both the school counsellors and Muslim adolescents of Aotearoa.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background of the Topic.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Aim of the Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Significance of the Study.....	6
Outline of the Study.....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	7
Immigrant Children.....	7
School Counsellors.....	9
Immigrant Children in Schools.....	12
Ethical Decisions and Mental Health.....	15
Adolescent Muslim Females.....	20
Muslim Beliefs and Counsellors.....	24
Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology.....	34
Participants .....	34
Schools.....	35
Procedure .....	36
Measures.....	37
Ethical Considerations.....	38
Focus Group Approach.....	39
Focus Group Setting.....	40
Focus Group Process.....	40
Data Analysis.....	41
Chapter 4: Thematic Analysis.....	44
Research Question One: Counsellor Engagement.....	44
Research Question Two: Professional Development.....	53
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	56
Research Question One: Counsellor Engagement.....	56
Research Question Two: Skills and Application .....	59
Limitations.....	64
Conclusions.....	65

References.....	68
Appendices.....	78
Appendix A: Open-Ended Questions .....	78
Appendix B: Participant Demographic Questionnaire.....	79
Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet .....	80
Appendix D: School Counsellor Consent Form .....	82

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants..... 35