

## Muslim Perceptions of Relationship Education: A Survey Study

Currently, very little is known about formal support services for Muslim couples and family relationships, and what little is known comes from mental health literature. Due to the centrality of faith, many Muslims often seek traditional or religious sources of support for the family or other needs before making contact with other support services (Aloud & Rathur, 2009). Also, due to current socio-political climates and attitudes in the U.S. some Muslims may experience distrust of services offered outside the more immediate social and/or religious circles (Abu-Ras, Gheith, & Cournos, 2008; Skogrand & Shirer, 2007).

The aim of the current study is to validate and expand upon results of a small, qualitative study in a larger, quantitative survey study assessing Muslim attitudes toward relationship education.

### Sample:

- 86% of participants were female
- participants ranged from age 18-70
- 70% reported being South Asian (Indo/Pak)
- 80% reported being Sunni (largest Islamic sect)
- 46% of participants made 90K+ yearly
- 67% of participants were married

### Procedure

After IRB approval, an online survey was distributed through Muslim community networks (primarily through social media). The survey contained questions on general knowledge of RE, barriers to attending RE, and support to attend.

### Measures

**RE attitudes.** Since there is little available information on RE attitudes, items were created for this study to measure RE attitudes (e.g., *Do you think RE is potentially more harmful or helpful?* (measured from 1 = extremely harmful—10 = extremely helpful; *I would be uncomfortable sharing in a relationships class* (measured from 1 = strongly disagree—10 = strongly agree).

**Knowledge of RE:** Item created for this study: *How much do you know about RE?*

*(measured from 1 = very little—10 = A lot).*

**Preferences, Barriers, Logistics with RE:** Items created for this study: E.g., *I prefer not to get outside help for my relationship (1 = strongly disagree—10 = strongly agree); I prefer to go to my family or elders in the community for relationship help (1 = strongly disagree—10 = strongly agree); It is important that the relationship education class leader has the same religious background as you (1 = not at all important—10 = very important); I wouldn't be able to find time to attend a relationships class (1 = strongly disagree—10 = strongly agree); My family would be okay with me going to a relationships class (1 = strongly disagree—10 = strongly agree).*

## **Results**

Many reported RE can be more helpful than harmful (60% marking an eight or higher on the 10-point scale), but some level of discomfort sharing in RE (28% eight or higher). Many reported that a RE class leader with the same religious background is important (56% eight or higher), and to a lesser degree, the same cultural background (34% eight or higher). The results show a general openness for seeking outside help for the relationship (54% four or below), and limited evidence of a preference for seeking help from the family or religious leader only (44% four or below).

The results show a fair amount of uncertainty on many of the items (e.g., 20-25% marking a '5', or mid-point of the scale on many items). This may be due to an overall unfamiliarity with RE.

**For More Information Please Contact:**

Zoha Qureshi- [Zohaqu@gmail.com](mailto:Zohaqu@gmail.com)

Brandon Burr- [bburr1@uco.edu](mailto:bburr1@uco.edu)