

Clarification of issues raised on Research: Marital Relationships and/or Conflict in the Muslim Community

Assalamu Alaykum! In the CCN, Newsletter 0240 edition published on Sunday, 14 June 2009, I explained a bit about my PhD research project that investigates *Attitudes, Beliefs and Experiences of Marital Relationships and/or Conflict in the South East Queensland Muslim community*.

Since then there were some concerns that were raised by members of the Muslim community. I take this opportunity to address these concerns in case others had similar concerns and did not wish to participate in the research as a result.

Are the questionnaires confidential?

Absolutely! I would like to assure members of the Muslim community that the questionnaires are **100% confidential and anonymous**. Nowhere on the questionnaires do we ask for your name or contact details.

So then what is the number at the back of the questionnaire?

The number at the back of the questionnaire is a number given to each questionnaire to enable me to enter data collected against the questionnaire number and to ease checking of data when I come to verify if the data was entered correctly. It does not in any way link a questionnaire to any individual. To reassure you the questionnaire distribution process involved the following:

1. Questionnaires were printed.
2. Envelopes and Questionnaires were stamped with a questionnaire number.
3. Envelopes were filled with 5 items: an information sheet, a questionnaire, a reply paid envelope, MSS list, and a pen; which were then all sealed and placed in boxes.
4. Labels of random names from mailing lists were then printed and envelopes labelled.
5. The envelopes were then sent in boxes to the Griffith mailing room to be sent out.

If I put my ethnic background will I be identifiable as my ethnic group is a minority?

The chances of an individual being identified through ethnic background, educational level, income level, etc. is zero given the anonymity and randomness of questionnaire distribution to 1400 members of the Muslim community.

Why was the questionnaire sent to me? How was I selected to be sent a questionnaire?

From the members of the Muslim community, 1400 were selected at random through mailing lists that were compiled originally through electoral rolls and www.whitepages.com.au as a source. Some questionnaires were sent through organisational mailing lists directly through the specific organisations without me knowing who they were to ensure privacy of those individuals. In these cases some individuals who were members of multiple organisations may have received 2 questionnaires as a result. Other questionnaires were hand-delivered by various individuals. To ensure even distribution of questionnaires between males and females, a "Mr" or "Mrs/Ms" was inserted at random in front of the name. **No person was particularly targeted.**

Did all organisations you contacted allow you access to their mailing lists?

No. Organisations that had a clause of non-disclosure did not wish to participate in the questionnaire distribution process.

Did you design the questions in your questionnaire?

Section A questions were designed by me. Questions in Sections B, C, D, and E are instruments

that have been used extensively in previous research and designed by researchers that include non-Muslims. This is why some questions may not be completely relevant to Muslims. In order to compare my research results with previous research, I had to use instruments that have been used in previous research in the field. Q49 for example, is an instrument that has been used in 100s of research and is a licensed product that is fee-based requiring a payment to access it. In future I would like to be able to design instruments that will be particular to the Muslim worldview inshaAllah.

What are the outcomes of this research?

This research is expected to help design services, training and educational programs that will be geared towards empowering the Muslim community. Services that currently exist do not completely address Muslims' particular religious or cultural beliefs. It does not look at the family unit as a whole. The first thing most services do is separate the families. I would like my research to inform existing and future services to be inline with Islamic principles, i.e., preserving the sanctity of marriage and family. Marriage in Islam is based on love, mercy, kindness, comfort, tranquillity, and mutual consultation. When this is absent in the family, Islamic principles prescribe marital conflict resolution to begin by trying to resolve it in the private sphere, then progressing to the extended family sphere and then lastly, if not resolvable, to the community sphere. I would like to see my research helping people gain skills and tools that will help them maintain harmony in Muslim families inshaAllah.

Is this research a way for the government to interfere with Muslim marriages in the Muslim community?

Absolutely not! Allah says in the Quran in meaning, "Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change it themselves" (Quran, 13: 11). I do not believe that the government has the capacity to be able to address Muslim community marital issues simply because of their lack of religious and cultural understanding of these issues. If we want a positive change in our community, I believe we have to do so ourselves collectively. The Prophet says "The Muslim Ummah is like a body, when one part aches, the whole body feels it". I am trying through my research to diagnose the ache of our Muslim community in marital issues and then work towards finding a treatment that will be workable based on cultural and religious-appropriateness inshaAllah.

Have you been involved with the Muslim community?

Alhamdulillah I have been actively involved with the Muslim community for as far as I can remember. My dad, Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim, used to be the Imam of Darra Mosque for 9 years before his death. We were always nurtured to work for the betterment of the Muslim community. I have been involved actively in various activities with the Muslim community for the past 8¹/₂ years. Please refer to the attached CV for more details.

How many questionnaires were sent out?

1400

How many questionnaires have you received back?

120

I would like to encourage the Muslim community to participate in this research and make their voice count. Let us collectively build strong Muslim families that are based on the Quranic principles of love, mercy, kindness, comfort, compassion, tranquillity and mutual consultation.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, contact me on (07) **373 56992** or email me on n.ibrahim@griffith.edu.au.