

# Therapeutic Group Intervention for Muslim Women Surviving Domestic Violence

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## Summary

*Muslim women are often underrepresented in the therapeutic setting. This poster addresses the lack of representation of Muslim women in therapy. This poster will also touch on the need for more research on groups for Muslim women and the most effective way to set groups for Muslim women. This poster will mention the group process, therapeutic factors, gaps in the literature, and suggestions for further groups.*

## Introduction

This poster highlights the importance of having more literature on Muslim women in group therapy to better serve Muslim women. It also highlights the best way to implement evidence-based therapy and past practices when working with Muslim women. The hope of this poster is to spread awareness and encourage many professionals to expand the literature and utilize best practices to serve Muslim women in group therapy.

## Evidence-Based Practice

Through research, it has been shown that the most efficient evidence-based practice to provide in therapeutic groups for Muslim women surviving domestic violence is Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT therapy).

What is ACT Therapy?

- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT therapy) is a type of mindful psychotherapy that helps you stay focused on the present moment and accept thoughts and feelings without judgment. It aims to help you move forward through difficult emotions so you can put your energy into healing instead of dwelling on the negative.

ACT Therapy is known to have many similarities with the religion Islam.

Acceptance

- ACT proposes that people build a meaningful life by using acceptance to remain in touch with their long-term values. Similarly, Islam, advises its believers to focus on long-term consequences rather than immediate positive consequences. Islam also encourages individuals to think in a meaningful way such as ACT. By using acceptance, Muslim clients would be able to tie their religion into their therapeutic services.

Commitment

- ACT therapy focuses on taking actions that are meaningful and conducive to a values-congruent life. From this perspective, the moral and social-behavioral principles that Islam asks people to follow can also be seen as committed actions. Islam promotes commitment toward values.

“Similarities between ACT and Islam appear much greater than their differences, and because of the broad conceptual overlap, an Islamic approach has the potential to make significant contributions to ACT and contextual behavioral science. Being aware of these similarities can help religious leaders and counselors support Muslim clients in using ACT as an evidence-based psychotherapy” (Pekcan 2013).

Many clients value their religion. By incorporating views similar to the ones Muslim women believe in through group work, professionals would be able to effectively assist Muslim women who are surviving domestic violence. However, professionals must take into consideration that they too will need to have a clear understanding of Islam (even if they don't practice it) to be able to provide Muslim women with ACT therapy.

## Findings and Suggestions

- The Muslim population represents 4–6 million people (about twice the population of Arkansas) in the United States, however it is significantly underrepresented in therapeutic literature.
- The gap in the literature has made it very difficult for Muslim clients to receive assistance and for professionals to provide effective services to Muslim clients.
- Professionals must understand the difference between westernized and non-westernized therapeutic views.

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