SPIRITUAL COPING STRATEGIES FROM THE ISLAMIC WORLVIEW

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Abstract

This article aims at examining some spiritual or religious coping strategies from the Islamic point of view. It is a matter of fact that religion plays a significant role for an individual in facing complexities and challenges of life. Spiritual or religious coping strategies have been identified as a contributing factor which could affect individual behaviour, and subsequently will affect the communal behaviour. The novel aspect of this article is that apart from drawing theoretical conclusion from the existing work of counseling, is to integrate the Islamic principle pertaining to counseling in a way to address obvious inadequacies in the existing counseling services offered to the Muslims. Therefore, it is appropriate to unearth the influence of religion and religious communities, in this case Islam and Muslims, while they are coping with the challenges and problems. This article provides an overview of related literature covering the wide range of issues pertaining to the Islamic perspective on the problems and coping strategies in general. There are many integrative methods and means that could be derived from the Islamic authentic sources namely the Holy Book (al-Qur’an), the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (al-Sunnah) and the Islamic heritage (al-thurath) as well as the modern methods. From review of the literature, the Islamic coping strategies are categorized into two components. The first is the internal one which consists of acquiring knowledge, spiritual-based experience and faith. The second is the external which comprises social, professional and institutional support. In sum, the collaborative religious coping strategies balance an individual’s own efforts in managing stress by seeking help and support from other people.

Keywords: coping strategies, Islamic worldview, Islamic counseling, Islamic principles, Spirituality

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion has been identified to have critically affected the way in which people behave. It affects individual behaviour, which, in turn, affects by the collective social and communal behaviour. Spiritual or religious coping strategies play a significant role in reducing the challenges and needs faced by the individual (Raiya et al., 2010). The most widely held views of stress and coping emphasizes both the subjective evaluation of external stressors and the assessment of the individual’s capacity to cope using perceived resources. According to these views, individuals experience the consequences of stress when the perceived demands of a situation exceed the perceived resources for coping. An individual’s religious beliefs are of particular interest, as they influence on how individuals evaluate stressors and assess their perceived resources for coping (Pargament 1997). According to Corsini (2009), significant negative events in the life are likely to activate the attachment of an individual to certain belief system. In such cases, God may be conceptualized as a
secure base utilized for coping. The Islamic belief system differs from what was mentioned by Pargament (1997), Corsini (2009) and others. It has a unique effect on the lives of Muslims in general, and the special-need groups in particular. The local religious neighborhoods and communities also play significant roles in this respect.

Western psychologists in the opinion of Badri (1979), put forward the theories that are adopted in counseling, psychotherapy and other helping professions, concerning man’s personality, motivation and behavior in many ways contradict Islam. Sadly forwent of better alternatives these theories and their applications are readily adopted by Muslims, which unfortunately lead many of them to consciously or unconsciously accept theories and practices that are, to say the least, unsuitable for application particularly on Muslims. However it is important for the Muslim psychologists, counselors and psychotherapists not to rely solely on the adaptation of these existing theories, rather they must develop their own theories and approaches based on originality and self-confidence (Badri 1979). Miskawayh (1968) mentions that, the individual who seek to preserve the health of the soul needs to perform himself both duties; theoretical part (knowledge) and the practical part (duty).

2. THE ISLAMIC COPING STRATEGIES

This paper attempts to explain an issues pertaining to the Islamic perspective coping strategies. The Islamic coping strategies are developed into two components; (a) the internal (acquiring knowledge, spiritual-based experience and faith,) and (b) the external coping (social and professional supports). The external coping consists of persuasion, convincing and influence that take place through talking, preaching and advising, while for the internal coping is through the development of inner thoughts and cognitions.

2.1 The Internal Coping

The internal coping strategies are built with strong faith in Allah, strong personalities and resilient spirituality. The archetypes of these are in the faith and characteristic of our Prophet of Muhammad (PBUH.). The aims of the Islamic spiritual and psychological coping are to understand the different aspects of man via the spiritual path which establishes the individual relation with God (Husain 2006). The integration of personality through psychic and spiritual forces is very important in Islam. Harmonization of the personality in satisfying both body and soul is states in the Quran; Surah al-Qasas (28:77). This Islamic values shape the individual personality and behaviour (Rusnah Muhamad & Ab. Mumin 2006), thereby influencing the society and community. Therefore, the Islamic psychology and spiritual coping based on the Quranic teachings and principles of Islamic guidance can be integrated into a theoretical framework and also may be utilized to provide therapeutic interventions.

2.1.1 The Spiritual-Based Experience

Spirituality and morality is a set of principles that regulate human relationships and prescribe modes of behaviour. Islam believes that each baby born with potential, of moral and spiritual developments. Therefore, it depends on the experiences that child would face in the future, to build and implement the good character in terms of moral and spiritual development, the responsibility of which falls on the parents. Spirituality requires Islamic ethics, which involves the acquisition of good character,
through nurturing of character. This requires balancing the three faculties of soul; knowledge, action and habituation to virtue. The character occurs for two main reasons; the different innate natures of soul and instruction, and habituation. In order to cultivate virtue, education is required which should be practiced either in private or public. As character can change depending on the way it is nurtured (Muhamed 2006), so also parenting skill and knowledge that needed to undergo changes in order to give the quality of training or ‘tarbiyah’ to the children.

Islam is a way of life which concept is bounded by Islamic ethical values that integrates man with Allah. One of the basic elements of the Islamic religion is akhlaq (moral and values) that shape the moral and ethical behaviour of Muslims in conducting all aspect of their life. The religious person are likely to align behavior in compliant with the religious belief and practice. According to Rusnah Muhamad & Ab. Mumin (2006), individuals who are strong and committed to religion are capable of making decisions. The more act of worship performed then the greater and stronger the good character will prevail. As he states: (Muhamed 2006, 234):

The more acts of worship one performs through living a long life, the greater will be the reward, the purer and clearer the soul, and the stronger and more deeply-rooted the good traits of character. For the sole purpose of acts of worship is influence of the heart, and this influence will grow strong when they are persistently repeated.

Based on the Quranic verses in Surah Luqman (31; 18-19), the belief or ‘tawhidic' paradigm is instilled first above all, by doing good things to parents and be responsible in attitude and behaviour. The hadith also mentioned about the importance of nurturing the children by giving them knowledge.

“When the son of Adam passes away, all (of his deeds) are discontinued except for three things: property he invested in the way of Allah, knowledge which benefits others and a pious son who pray for him.” (Narrated by Muslim)

Besides that, the cultivation of virtues and values are also important especially because these will make one’s life meaningful and gives a sense of direction (Husain 2006). All these have been found to be associated with well-being as defined by spirits, life satisfaction, congruence with life goals, positive effect, and pro-social behaviours (Naseef 1999; Hartati 2003; Husain 2006). Since ethics are concerned with right and wrong, therefore it is the individuals’ belief of what is right and wrong that can help him to cope with all situations in life. Miskawayh defines a character (as cited in Mohamed 2006, 42 & 220):

“People fall into many grades depending on their capacity to acquire these good traits, which we called character, their eagerness to learn them, and their care for them. We can witness and examine their differences in people particularly in children. For the character of boys and their receptivity, or their aversion, to character improvement…if innate nature is neglected and not subjected to discipline and correction, every man will grow up in accordance with his own nature and will remain all his life in the condition in which he was
in childhood, following whatever suits him naturally: whether wrath, pleasure, maliciousness, greed, or any other reprehensible or predisposition.”

In Islam, a way to develop a good and admirable personality in an individual, (which in the context of this study are referred to the working single mothers) the best and perfect role model presented by Islam is Prophet Muhammad and his wives. By following their ways, individual can inculcate a good personal character. Having a good personality and the best role model portrayal requires as man to undergo a process which consists of three stages of development which are termed as psycho-spiritual developments. Understanding the self, requires a study on the spiritual aspect of the self. According to Husain (2006), from Islamic the perspective, nafs or self has three basic levels: (a) nafs al-ammarah (evil inciting soul), (b) nafs al-lawwamah (complaining soul), and (c) nafs al-mutmainnah (tranquil soul). In order to achieve harmony within self and to develops one’s of personality, the balancing of the various aspects of the self is of paramount importance.

Man possesses a spiritual virtue, by which he is akin to the good spirits Miskawayh (1968). The immortal spirit (ruh) is the force behind the body; it manifests itself through the body as life, movement, sensation, cognition, reasoning and discretion. As he states: (Mohamed 2006, 234)

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Al-Farabi proves that soul is independent from the body and the principle of life in man (by which man thinks feels and will), by opposing it would be the material nature while attributing to it as spiritual nature (Kasule 2009). A balanced soul is the precondition for the emergence of virtues. Al Ghazali mentions four basic virtues of wisdom, courage, continence and balance that are the synthesis of all others (Badawi 2002). The rehabilitation of self (tazkiyat al-nafs) is important in implementing all these criteria. This is done through the process of self-evaluation or ‘muhasabah’ of the deeds done, self-punishment or ‘muaqabah,’ repenting ‘taubah’, learning from mistakes, self-correction and change ‘mujahadah’ and consistency in doing good or endeavouring the actions ‘istiqamah’ in life (Husain 2006). Through this process a Muslim is constantly reminded of his/her main goals in life as a servant of Allah.

The purification of the soul through prayer, reciting Quran, thankful to Allah and believe in Allah gives the servant strong spirit and soul. As mentioned by al-Ghazali in respect of those who want to gain happiness and love in this life is through the worship of Allah. Then only man can achieve the supreme happiness. Al Ghazali states (as cited in Mohamed 2006, 223):

Know then, that the special perfection of man is to apprehend the reality of the intelligible as they are, without illusions and intermediary of the senses that are shared by animals. Then know that the soul itself thirst for it, and it is naturally predisposed towards it. It is distracted by its preoccupation with physical desire, and has become liberated from it. If man can meditate and reflect upon the sovereignty of the kingdom of the heaven and earth; and
also study his soul and the wonders created within his body, he would attain that special degree of perfection. He would then achieve happiness in the world; there is otherwise no meaning to happiness except through the attainment of the soul’s level of perfection.

Comparing this with the Need Theory of Maslow in to achieving the self-actualization al-Ghazali is more comprehensive.

2.1.2 Acquiring Knowledge

In the concept of knowledge and the principles of teaching Islam is to know Allah, to understand the purpose of creation, and the role as an ‘ummah’. Al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina and al-Ghazali take the same views in asserting that soul as the real essence of man. Therefore, the activity of the soul is to attain the truth about the existence of God through knowledge. Al-Ghazali classifies knowledge into four categories; (a) the knowledge of the self (related to the purpose of the creation of man in this world and what is the meaning of happiness and misery to him, this knowledge is the door to the knowledge of God, (b) the knowledge of the God (nurtures man to love God and lead one to the knowledge of Divine existence), (c) the knowledge of the world and (d) the knowledge of the world after death. By knowing all these knowledge man can find happiness (Akhir 2008).

Man is weak in getting the knowledge of the Supreme Reality, therefore the only way to know Allah is through revelation. Through revelation, knowledge provides a resource for individuals facing uncertainties such as parenting issues, where it can nurture the inner spiritual lives and guidance to purpose, meaning and ethical action. Since man’s soul determines his behaviour therefore, he needs to cleanse and purify his soul in order to receive the knowledge. This tazkiyat al-nafs (cleansing of the soul) will bring man nearer to Allah the Creator. In this effort to purify the soul, man needs helps, guidance and supports from the commandments of faith to gain control over the passions. These commandments can strengthen and influence man’s soul, for a man who performs good deeds and fair actions portrays the virtuous state of the soul. By purifying the heart of its negative qualities man can turn his heart towards Allah.

In order to acquire knowledge, man must follow the principle of ‘tawhid’ in order to attain ‘taqwa’. In Islam, religious faith, beliefs, and activities are important aspects of the lives of an individual. Faith develops the context of interpersonal relationships, and that the capacity and need for faith are innate human characteristics. Individuals may develop deeper understanding and appreciation of the religion in which they are raised, in part because of their active exploration of that faith as well as alternative value systems, or they may adopt religious views and values that differ from those of their parents and childhood religious communities. These exposures and experiences contribute to the process of nurturing their children. The interpretation of seeking the pleasure of Allah is through worship (ibadah). All this must go through a level of the value system of Islam called ‘taqwa’. It is the actualization of human potentials with ‘taqwa’ the pillar of all types of motivation.

2.1.3 Faith in Allah

Religion provides mechanisms for coping with adversity, and may serve as a source of self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy. Such religious attributions create
meaning that may preserve or enhance self-esteem by allowing the individuals to perceive God’s love and acceptance even under trying circumstances. Muslims who differ in their religious beliefs and involvement may model different kinds of behaviours, beliefs, and values for their children. Thus, religious individuals may be more likely to act as models of highly pro-social behaviour than those less religiously active parents. Man’s own religiosity may influence other’s developing religiosity and spirituality, which may in turn affect other aspects of well-being. For example, being mothers, they both model and directly teach religious behaviour and beliefs, thus passing these beliefs on to their children, and they may actively manage their children’s lives so as to expose them to a social network with shared religious beliefs and values. Their religious beliefs and practices may affect their own mental health and consequently their ability to deal with stresses associated with parenting (Naseef, 1999).

The Qur’an states: “Let them respond to me, and believe in me. So they may be directed” (al-Baqarah 2:186). Based on this verse the Islamic belief system provides comprehensive holistic and dynamic perspective on life. Faith in Allah is the prior and essential characteristic of faith that demarcates the faithful Muslim community (Hamadi 2005). The practice of Islamic lifestyle is important to maintain the spiritual development. In a broader perspective, spiritual aspect is one of the main solutions in coping with the challenges and needs. This resulted from the premise of belief of a Muslim where in the knowledge of the God’s existence is self-evident to human mind; it requires no learning, reflection, or proof. It is contained in the elemental human nature (fitrah) (Badawi 2002; Mohamed 2006). This belief shapes the behaviour of a person in accepting the fate that Allah gave him.

Having exposed with hardship, would give strength to man to cope through spiritual coping approaches which would guide him in leading his life towards Allah’s will. The various religious, legal and moral obligations are interconnected as they are subsumed under Allah’s will. However there is also a theological dimension where people obey Allah because He is the only God whom mankind seeks and asks for everything. This is by means of their innate character which is called fitrah, to progress towards happiness and to move forward to achieve their very best in life so as to serve as the khalifah. Faith is the source of moral virtue in Islam; this virtue guided the humankind to be strong in dealing with challenges as this is the fitrah. In the concept of fitrah, a person who has self control is called halim. Man’s relation to Allah as His servant (’abd), and his relation with his fellow-man should be determined by hilim, by controlling his feelings and passions, by remaining calm and undisturbed even when provoked by others (Mohamed 2006, 14). The self-control or hilim, is one of the great ethical quality that can give courage to man in coping with problems.

i. Attain the Pleasure of Allah

The need for love and safety is needed by everyone. But the ultimate love that can generate the strength is love of God. According to al-Ghazali (2007), through the love of God man achieve the level of self-actualization. He states that, “awareness in this life is a preparation for the life of the hereafter, it makes us concerned with the improvement of our character” (cited in Akhir 2008, 38). This give’s meaning to man that life is to seek the pleasure of Allah, it motivates him to use all his capacity as human to strive for living, to choose for the best direction in his life (Miskawayh 1968), The courage he has, lead man to move forward. As for the treatment of
sorrow and fear due to the cause of losing beloved one or an unfulfilled desire is by changing the believe that can perish and makes difference to one’s attitude towards life. In the context of seeking the pleasure of Allah it is important to focus on the fulfilment of the responsibilities.

ii. Positive Thinking (Husn az-Zan)

Internalizing the concept of positive thinking is very important to cope with challenges and problems. It can be inculcated or applied through compliance, identification (imitate with pride someone’s identified behaviour) and internalization (values, sincerity and gratefulness) of the values. According to Husain (2006), Islamic way of remedies like fear of Allah, hope in Allah, patience, repentance, and thankfulness are suggested in order to cope with all challenges and problems in life. As suggested by Miskawayh (1968), reflection, thought, and judgment using rational faculty (‘aql) can provide a person with a healthy soul. Such example of positive thinking is on grief. Al-Kindi’s remarks on grief in his book ‘the Repelling of Grief’ he mentioned (as cited in Miskawayh 1968 194);

“If he realizes that the causes of this grief are not necessary; and he realize also that many people who do not possess such property instead of grieved are, on the contrary, joy and happy—if such a person does this, he will undoubtedly come to know that grief is neither necessary nor natural and that he who is grieved and brings this accident upon himself will inevitably be comforted and will return to his natural state”.

Therefore, in dealing with the fate such as losing the loved one, individuals should practice the concept of positive thinking to cope with such events in their life. Reflecting upon their lives, being grateful to Allah and applying some of the positive thinking will uphold the positive perception about Allah, to be determined and optimist with life is obstacle, kind and love to others, sincerity and looking at others difficulties by comparing with ourselves, repentance and looking at the other creations of Allah. As a responsible ‘abd, man is responsible to act according to what is expected by Allah, of people and what they can expect in life. And also imparts the values that shape a person's beliefs, abilities, and actions.

In short, to protect the body, man need to purify his heart and guard his body from any sinful action. This is so because the person’s eternal destiny in life depends on how s/he conduct their life. The role of ‘da'wah’ or religious preaching is important in providing the support in terms of Islamic teachings, guidance, education as provisions of purpose and meaning in life for every individual Muslims. All this are related to the external coping strategies that will be discussed further.

2.2 External Coping Strategies

As a religion, Islam imposes two concepts of relation; relation of mankind to God and relation between mankind and society. Man is gregarious by his nature, he cannot live by himself. His existence is only possible when he in association with other fellow human beings. The religion of Islam demands the existence of a Muslim community or ummah. Allah said:

“And there may spring from you a community (ummah) who invite to goodness, and enjoin good conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful. (Quran 3:104)
In explaining the concept of *ummah*, observes that the Muslim community represents a system of social relations that facilitates the flowering of spiritual aspiration while at the same time representing an ordered way in exercising the *amanah* on life, intelligence, power, and property. As stated in the Quran and Sunnah, which remind every Muslim to care for one’s parents and of the weaker or poorer members of the family especially the orphans in the family. Other members are to be looked after and treated with honour, kindness and respect, and in the same way these responsibilities extend to one’s grand-children and great-grandchildren. The elderly are loved, respected and taken care of. The members of the family remain integrated within it, the aged do not go to old folks’ homes and orphans are not thrown into orphanages. The poor and unemployed are not made to survive on public assistance. Instead, all of these problems are, in the first instance, solved within the framework of the family in a way that it is more humane in keeping with the honour and needs of everyone. It is not financial, emotional, or physical deprivation that is catered for but also spiritual aspects are taken care of. In Quran, it is stated that,

“*Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction. For those who believe and work righteousness, (enjoy every) blessedness and a beautiful place of (final) return*” (Ar Ra’d: 28-29)

Among the external supports which are given done consideration as part of the coping strategies provided in Islam are social support and professional support. First the researcher will explain on the social support and second the researcher will explain further on the professional support.

2.1.1 Social Support

Islam takes special concern in helping others, and it is considered as both an individual and communal obligation. There are members of the society whose rights are protected as such must be fulfilled. They cannot be neglected and their rights cannot be deprived. They deserve all the protections. Members of the society, which refer to the community is also responsible, be it neighbours or community leader, to uplift the burden of a working single mothers and their families in helping, assisting and contributing necessarily and continuously. The right of the deprived and weak people is given utmost priority in Islam. In short, the coping strategies in Islam not only provide for the spiritual aspects played by individuals, but also the community. This category of social supports is divided into: (i) family and (ii) community support.

i. Family Support

The essence of the relationship of an individual to others outside is generally impersonal. Families undergoing divorce may need help particularly in the midst of the immediate upheaval of separation for effective reorganization in single-parent households and co-parenting issues. The coping styles of a person are often shaped by value orientation and beliefs (as cited in Bridges & Kristin 2002, 16). This is in line with (Corsini 2009). According to him, support relationships with religious parents may promote high levels of religiosity, and belief.
As Islam directs parents to take responsibility for all the children that they procreate so that all children in society receive the benefit of love and affection. Both sexes are responsible for the care of children, but, in the area of property, men are more responsible than women (Banks 1976). According to Chiam Heng Keng (1992), the three functions of family are reproduction, socialization and emotional support. The family is the original caring institution in the community, especially in giving support, as facilitator or mediator, (Ismail Baba 1992). While as explained by Zaharah Awang (1992), as part of the communal support, two vital functions of family: (a) the family as the primary socializing agent in the development of the individual’s personality towards his adjustment to the environment and (b) the emotional maintenance function are the supports of the family to its members.

ii. Religious Community Support

The human race is the product of this institution where the creation of man and woman and their marital relationship permeated with tranquility, love and mercy have been described by the Quran as ‘sign of God”. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said that marriage is part of his sunnah so whoever shy away from that is not considered among his Ummah. Marriage is a nature of contract. In the same token, Islam permits divorce is in cases when marriage failed. Remarriage is allowed, even encouraged if it provides good security for the women and their children. There is no stigma attached to remarriage or to marrying a divorcee or widower. Even good Islamic practise has been portrayed in by the Prophet Muhammad and in the era of “sahabah” (the companion of the prophet) who demanded to look upon those women and take them as their wives in the way of supporting and helping so as to have their future life after the death of their husband due to wars (jihad) in protecting and preaching Islam (Saadawi 1982, 198). It shows that the concept of polygamy is not simply to satisfy the sexual appetite but rather it is to perform an act of ‘ibadah’ in the sense of protecting and securing the Ummah. Although polygamy may be painful for some women, it is beneficial for other women and for the society at a whole (Philips 2005, 71).

In the Malaysian context, this issue of marriage and divorce should not become a problem or major issues among the community or the society itself, if it is tackled in the best interest and if looking through the right perspectives of all. Islam affirms the equality of men and women as human beings, their distribution of roles is clearly defined. The most important part is every Muslims should perform their duties accordingly as required by Islam.

2.1.2 Professional Support

The development of individual’s behavior, attitude, and spirituality are shaped by their surroundings be it family at home, school, friends, society or community. Based on this, religious coping strategies work well in collaboration manner with supports from others. Society gives meaning to an individual’s life. Society is ‘the sinequa-non condition of morality… and of religious ‘falalh’ (al-Faruqi 2004, 94).

Social responsibility prescribes that individual should help others who are dependent on them. Every human society employs the resources available to it to produce a stream of output which is distributed in some manner among its members (Ahmad Ziauddin 1991). The spirit of cooperation is reflected in the command to help others by giving charity. The underlying rationale in the responsibility to help others is
that the less fortunate have a share in the wealth of the privileged few as mentioned in the Quran (al-Dhariyat 51: 19; al-Maa’rij 70: 25). The basic moral for the need fulfillment is noted in the Quran as both individual and communal obligation. Those who are less fortunate in society are entitled to assistance and social support from their fortunate neighbors and relative.

According to Maher Hathout (2006), with regard to financial or material issues, every able bodied individual, first and foremost, is required to make the effort to earn his own livelihood, to support himself and his family. However, as a social response to deprivation, God commands people to help others who are suffering or in need, in a positive spirit of mutual cooperation. This is based on the perspective that everyone in society is connected to each other through their shared humanity, and therefore required to live in a spirit of cooperation mentioned in Al Quran (al-Maidah 5: 2; al-Tawbah 9: 7). It states that the responsibility is to protect the community in particular and the citizen in general such as; to realize the well-being of its citizen by ensuring the protection of faith, life, intellect, properties, and family. The protection of life is only possible if the basic survival needs are taken care of.

Juridistic literature supports these principles. It identifies three categories of human needs: necessities; everything that protect physical existence such as life, property and religion, healthcare, education and social security (daruriyyat), conveniences; (hajiyyat) and refinements (tahsiniyyat) (as cited in Maher Hathout et.al 2006, 366) . Based on the explanation on the importance of professional support, the researcher has identified two types of professional supports namely: (i) the religious institutional support and (ii) counseling support, which the Malay working single mothers must find resources to in their time of need.

### i. Religious Institutional Support

Religious institutional support is a kind of commitment in respect of welfare, and responses to the problems offered by the community. The purpose of social welfare policies in Islam are threefold: (a) to maintain life (food, water, shelter, clothing, and education to reduce sufferi)ng) (b) to secure employment, economic security, (c) to maximize human dignity or opportunities to build human dignity. According to Ismail (1992, 510), the word caring implies that “every individual needs to have a high level of understanding, responsibility and self awareness”. The term social welfare is still largely restricted to mean the provision of financial assistance to the poor, care of disabled and the underprivileged and assistance to victims of natural disaster. The fact that the welfare service also has preventive and developmental service is yet to be understood (Zaharah Awang 1992, 3). In Malaysia some of the religious social welfare institutions include YADIM, YAPIEM and Islamic Department in every state, which care for the needy like working single mothers. Within this, the researcher will explain some of the roles of these welfare institutions in Malaysia. Among them are: (a) Islamic Treasury Institution (Baitulmal), (b) Islamic Legal Institution (Shariah court) and (b) Educational Institution.

#### a) Islamic Treasury Institution (Baitulmal)

Islam has its own social network and social service system to help the needy in the community. One of the fundamental pillars in Islam is zakat, which stresses the importance of welfare and charity. Zakat institution plays great roles in the way Malay Muslims working single mothers cope with financial difficulties by being a source of
financial support (Ahmad Ziauddin 1991). As a matter of fact, Baitulmal is seen as a charitable organization among the Muslim community in Malaysia, as it is more focused on the administration of zakat (aims) funds as well as its distribution to the needy. Baitulmal generally falls under the jurisdiction of the respective states Islamic religious councils in Malaysia. The responsibilities of these councils include promoting, facilitating and improving the economic and social developments of Muslims. They are allowed to form organizations to operate and manage projects, schemes or industries planned or developed by the councils for the socio-economic advancement of the Muslims. The councils are authorized to use any asset or money that are not needed immediately to be invested in securities that are used in purchasing for trust money as well as deposit them in conventional or Islamic banks and financial institutions for some returns.

(b) Islamic Legal Institution

Islamic Legal system in Islam gives legal right to certain close relatives to claim maintenance support from those in a position to help (Ahmad Ziauddin 1991). The legal injunctions in the Quran states that about one third of the ‘ahkam’ relate to the family and its proper conduct. The network of rights and obligations that provide the basis of a family life aims at producing those attitudes and behaviour patterns that Islam wants to foster in the individual and society. In case of the divorcee, the young children remain in the custody of their divorced mother. However, legally the father is bound to provide the cost of maintenance of his children though they remain under the custody of their mother (Abdul Ati 1957). The Quran state on divorce in very general terms: "And if you fear that the two (i. e husband and wife) may not be able to keep the limits ordered by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she redeems herself (from the marriage tie)" (2:229).

In Malaysia, the legislation rules is that a women who becomes single parent because of death, desertion of husband or divorce (3Ds) could request assistance in the form of pensions, employees provident fund and maintenance, (p.534). However the family Law for Muslims is by constitutional provision, be dealt with the Syariah Courts. The new Islamic Family Law Act 1984 gives Muslims women more protection within marriage and regulates divorce and ancillary matters as in the Law of Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act (as cited in Reedy 1992, 536). In case of children when their father died, the mother shall be the guardian. According to Islamic practice, the importance of maternal bond has been expressed in many traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In one narration Abu Hurairah (RA) reported that a woman approached the Prophet, where her former husband wanted to take the child away from her after divorced. The Prophet said: “You have more right after him, so as long as you do not marry”.(Sunan Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Talaq Vol.2, 6).

Remarriage of a mother may affect the maternal priority upon children. Muslim scholars are in a unanimous agreement that when a father is well-off and capable of supporting his family, this responsibility cannot be shared with others. If the father refuses to maintain them, he can be penalized (Kamali 2000). However, if he is poor or unable to work due to sickness, or old age, then the responsibility will be transferred to other family members especially the mother and grandfather of the children (al-Zuhayly 1997). This principle is reflected in all family law enactments of the states in Malaysia.
(c) Educational Institution

School provides education. In school children learn, taught, interact and socialize with peer and other teachers (Thomas 2000). Since they spend much time in school, the environment of continuity, routine works and activities can offer safe interventions for them (Schmidt 2003). School is in a strategic position to offer supportive services to children.

Islam emphasizes the importance of seeking knowledge to all Muslims. Education is the best investment in the development of intellectual, moral, spiritual and emotional aspects of an individual. This differs from the Western objective of providing education, with a purpose to provide for economic prosperity of a nation. Islam propagates education to prepare the young generation, for character building and good leadership. The growth and development of Islamic personality is the major goal in educating children. In an effort to inculcate Islamic values the teaching should be done not only in school, but also at home, by parent. By integrating approach of inculcating the values through role model to instil good and positive thought, behavior, attitude, moral and spiritual emanating from Islamic beliefs, they absorb the Islamic values from their parents, teachers, peers and the environment including the care-giver. Otherwise, undesirable habit and unethical conduct would prevail and extremely difficult to shape them back to become good Muslims.

ii. Islamic Counseling Support

Counselling is considered an effort to help each other which is also one of the Islamic teachings. Counselling is one of those scopes of helping each other and is considered as ‘fard kitayah’ (Salleh 1993). Counselling is considered as one of the branch in the ‘hukm’ and ‘Adab al-Islami’. As mentioned in the Quran the concept of “al-Amru bi al-Ma’ruf Wa nahyu ‘An al-Munkar” which is the foundation for every individual Muslim in performing actions and lead life. This responsibility is a collective responsibility in Islam which includes counsellor and counselling services, (M. M. Zafir 2006) Allah said in the Quran:

And you must be of help to each other in the way of good deeds and ‘taqwa’ and not in the wrongdoings and encroachment of rights. (Al Maidah: 2)

a) The Concept of Islamic Counselling

Islamic counselling concept is to give sincere advice towards the rightly path way from being astray in the life of human being in this world and in Hereafter. The concepts of guidance and counselling are mentioned several times in the Holy Quran. The word guidance or rashada, murshid, rushd and rashid etc are mentioned nineteen times in the Quran and the term man lead a ‘nasaha’ and its derivatives are also mentioned therein for thirteen times (Raba 2001).

The counselling approach, as support, is given holistically, addressing every aspect of human beings. It does not neglect the spiritual aspect of a man while focusing only on the physical, psychological or emotional aspect. The spiritual aspect is given utmost attention as it is duly neglected in modern counselling therapy. One of the key aspects is the concept of ‘tazkiyat al-nafs’ (rehabilitation) that emphasizes on the reformation of individual Muslim (Salleh 1993; Badawi 2002; Husain 2006; Mohamed 2006).
Counselling and support service through professional counselling or informal sessions are similar to the concept of cooperation and concern among the community (Chiam Heng Keng 1992; Ghani 2006). Islam is not against counselling approach rather it promotes counselling in a way that it plays critical component in the preaching of Islam. This is true enough as the word of Allah demands us to preach Islam through wisdom (hikmah) and good role model (mawizah hasanah). The advice given by counsellors is clearly understood by the people. It is through sincere and honest counselling that a counsellor can guide people towards the right path, to correct the bad behaviour, to repent from committing the same mistake, to start a new and to look forward for a positive life. Islamic counselling totally differs from the type of counselling that unethically advice clients and saying that there is no room for change of individual behaviour that leads the client into believing and accepting the bad behaviour while turning the attention and focus towards other things as a way to dodge bad behaviour. This may include; worry, grief, incapacity, cowardice, miserliness, being heavily in debt and laziness. The Prophet used to say:

“O Allah! I seek protection by You from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being subjugated by others.” (Hadith vol. 8, Chapter 75, No. 374)

Besides giving help or guidance through individual counselling, other type of counselling can also be taking into consideration to help the working single mothers in dealing with their challenges and needs, for instance, group counselling. Group counselling is a concept by which the burden, the hardship, emotional sufferings are shared among a close group of people currently experiencing similar grief. This is in line with the concept of workgroup or “amal jama’i” which is not as it was practiced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) whom he practiced “shura” among his “sahabah” or companions of the Prophet. This practice is still in vogue among Muslims through the practice of ‘usrah’ or ‘halaqah’ as media to share ideas, get and spread the information and strengthen the ummah. By using the same platform of ‘usrah’ or ‘halaqah’, the Islamic counselling therapy can be a support for working single mothers.

CONCLUSION
The way one looks at ones family, children, parents, siblings and spouse or close relatives; interacts with the neighbourhood, and surroundings and settings; relates with children’s schools, workplace etc are all determined by his worldview about life and its purpose. Religion plays an inevitable role in all these. This is specifically so among the established Muslim communities anywhere in the world. That is, the Islamic beliefs, religious rules and codes of conduct imply upon the way Muslims establish their priorities, and cope with various situations in the life. Specifically, this explains how Islamic practice and belief help and influence the way the Muslim cope with their needs, and what challenges they face while trying to get their needs fulfilled and how they cope with them.
REFERENCES


