

Islamic background of a theocratic and monarchical family

Sociology



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Personal experience I am from an Islamic background in a theocratic and monarchical family. In this country, both the national law and the social conventions demand that every citizen be a Muslim. This is the only recognized religion and most of the citizens are either salafi/or Sunni Muslims as there is almost no religious freedom. It is common for non-compliant or defiant Muslims who may fail to follow official programs and interpretations to face punitive actions at the hands of the religious police. For instance, I am a Shia Muslim which comprises of a minority group and this is already a violation of the normal order. This has forced me to become extremely sensitive of any form of discrimination a fact that has taught me to keep hiding for the sake of protecting both myself and my family. Our likes are always the target and speaking up openly can easily earn you a jail sentence.

I have always tried to develop new mechanisms to survive in these conditions. As it is from my introduction, I try to understand myself deeply, seek advice from my clinical supervisor to fetch facts that would help define me in this situation. My personal defense mechanism was to stay passive in the whole, which on the other hand was more emotionally overwhelming. I was greatly affected by the unfairness of the situation and perpetually assumed that it could not happen with American students. Even though I trust my clinical supervisor, I could not have enough courage to open up to him despite the fact that I felt it was the most professional thing to do. I think this is partly due to the accumulated fear from my past memories as speaking freely of the injustices of the system was also a crime. Growing up in a discriminated minority group, I had convinced myself that it is quite

unwise to challenge persons with more power than I have.

To overcome this I have to consistently do things that are right, but I have to struggle as they still seem odd to my conscience. It is also my duty to protect both my family and my community and had learned that speaking openly could risk their lives and I have thereby tried to avoid it.

This discriminatory experience has influenced a broader part of my life. For instance, it has influenced me both as a therapist and a clinical supervisor.

As a mental health professional I am most inclined to avoid speaking with my clients on religious topics just in case they held different believes from mine.

I may be forced to shift some of what would have been rightfully my responsibility to the religious authorities. This can be quite challenging as some cases or disorders such as schizophrenia are influenced by social dispositions and have symptoms that could be directly related to religion. In this case, a specialist is required to discuss such matters and believes as freely as possible to be in a position to help the client. This in my home country is not only difficult but also dangerous. In this case, I may not be in a position to handle such situations as effectively as required and thereby risk being branded incompetent