

## **Aging and the Role of Spirituality & Religion in Taking Care of the Muslim Elderly**

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### *Abstract*

This paper addresses the lack of understanding among healthcare professionals regarding the spiritual needs of older Muslim patients in Western contexts. Despite their training, many struggle to meet these patients' spiritual and emotional needs, particularly concerning loneliness and cultural differences. The necessity for evidence-based spiritual care (EBSC) is highlighted as a means to enhance support for Muslim seniors.

Introduced in 1998 by chaplain-researchers in Canada, EBSC involves a collaborative process where spiritual care providers engage with patients to identify spiritual concerns and utilize relevant research to address them. This approach promotes research literacy, enabling caregivers to apply findings effectively in their practice.

While spirituality is vital for Muslim adults aged 65 and older, specific research on elderly Muslims remains limited. Much existing literature is Western-centric, overlooking cultural nuances. This paper advocates for further exploration of family support, social dynamics, and healthcare needs of Muslim seniors, as these factors significantly impact their quality of life.

A culturally sensitive approach to spiritual care is essential, incorporating psychotherapeutic techniques and ensuring access to familiar religious practices. This fosters spirituality in older adults, allowing them to act as spiritual mentors to younger generations.

The paper also discusses aging theories, including David Moberg's insights into the spiritual needs of older individuals, integrating Islamic teachings with social science. The role of Muslim spiritual care providers is critical in helping aging clients reflect on existential questions and maintain their spiritual practices.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the need for more research to address the complexities of aging and spiritual care among Muslim populations, ultimately aiming to enhance their overall well-being and sense of community.

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