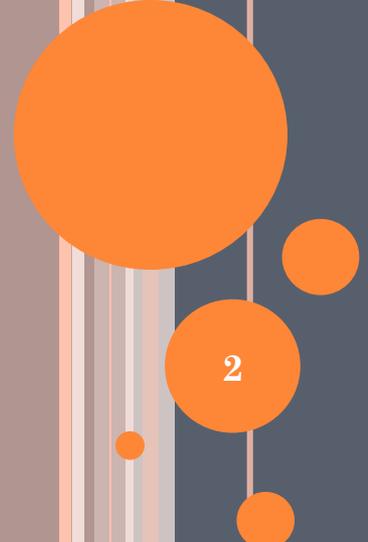
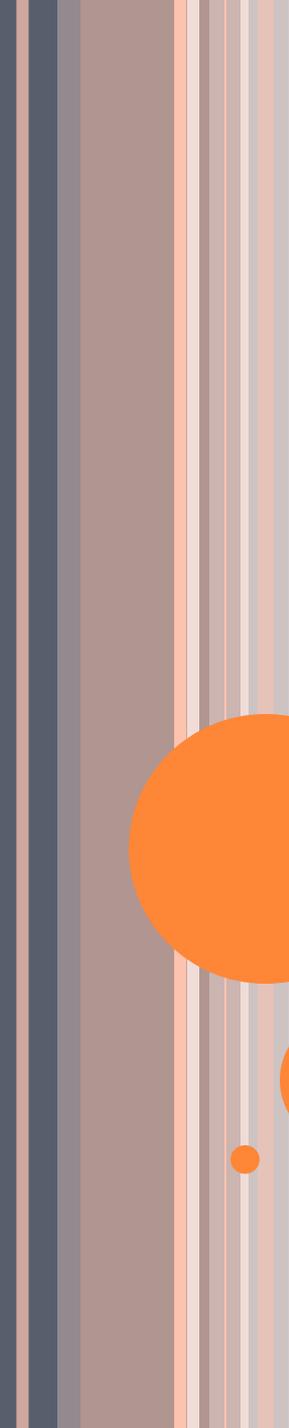


“MY CHILD IS A GIFT FROM ALLAH”

Presented by: Dr. Katie Bonawitz
**Associate Professor & Director of SPED Graduate
Programs, Bethel University**



BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH ISLAM

ISLAM RELATING TO DISABILITY

EFFECTS ON PARENTING

FAITH OR CULTURE

DIFFERENCES/SIMILARITIES

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

RESEARCH STUDY DETAILS

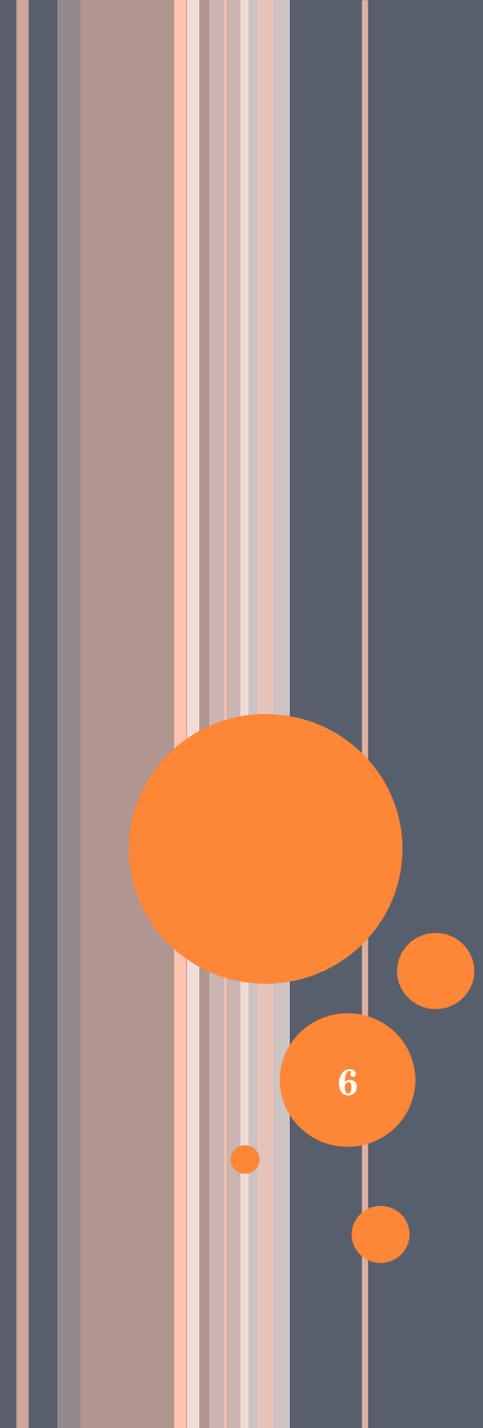
- Questions guiding this qualitative doctoral research:
 - How do Muslim parents in the UK and the US make sense of having and raising a child with a disability within their cultural and religious meaning systems?
 - How might Muslim parents desire that the schools work with them?
- United Kingdom – Pakistani Muslim Parents of Children with Disabilities
- United States – Somali Muslim Parents of Children with Disabilities
- Interviews were conducted with 5 Questions – additional prompts as necessary
 - Re: Child's education; community experiences; positive and negative experiences; faith or culture

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

- Limited information on religion and special education (Ault, 2009)
- Islamic belief systems not taken into account for educational planning (Jegatheesan, Miller & Fowler, 2010)
- Professionals' limited understanding of religious beliefs other than their own
- Growing numbers of Somali immigrants in Minnesota
- The critical role Islam plays in Muslims' daily lives

OTHER RESEARCH

- Ethnographic study of three South Asian Muslim immigrant families making sense of the experience of having sons with autism from within their cultural perspectives (Jegatheesan, Miller, & Fowler, 2010).
- “Islam permeated daily life and provided the primary framework within which they understood the meaning of having a child with autism. Their Islamic faith informed their acceptance that their child had autism, their expectations for their sons, and their own parenting behavior” (p. 101).
- Jegatheesan, Miller and Fowler “hoped that these findings [would] provide a culturally valid starting point for future studies of Muslim immigrant families in other communities” (p. 105).



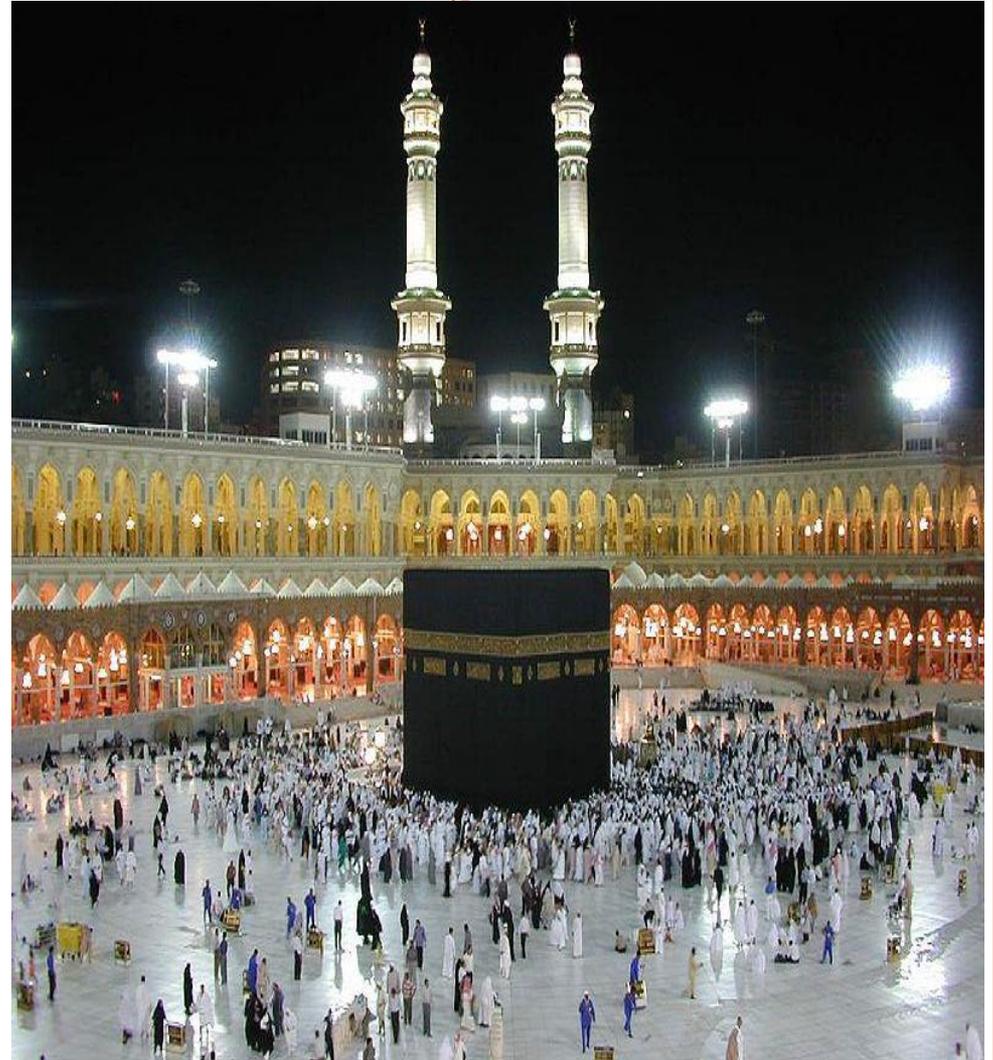
ISLAM

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- ❑ **Definition**
- ❑ **Perspectives of Disabilities**
- ❑ **Parenting Practices**

Definition of Islam:

- Islam is derived from the Arabic root "Aslama": peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious sense, Islam means submission to the will of (Allah) , the Arabic term for " God," and obedience to His law .
- Muslims believe that Islam is the final religion sent from heaven and the last law on Earth. In Islam the primary sources of knowledge come from the Prophet Mohammed, The Qur'an and traditions. Mohammed's life is considered as being the perfect example of putting the verses of the Qur'an into practice (Darwish, 2012)



ISLAM'S PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY

- Islam provides a great importance and keenness to all groups of society. Those with disabilities are especially and clearly mentioned in many of our Quran verses. A common example is: “There lies no obligations on those who suffer a disability or on those who are sick.”

ليس على الاعرج حرج
ولا على المريض حرج



Darwish, 2012

ISLAMIC VIEWS ABOUT DISABILITIES

- Islam recognizes that all children have the right to have equal life chances regardless of...being abled or disabled; and a parent who does not recognize this equality is accused of committing injustice (Morad, Nasri, & Merrick, 2001, p.68).
- Prophet Muhammad's involvement with people with disabilities exist throughout many hadith. The thoughts and actions of Muhammad are often the standard for Muslims' everyday living (Miles, 2002)
- Bazna and Hatab (2005) provide further insight: "In Islam, humans' original nature is essentially good. The Islamic teaching holds that people are born pure and,... potentially perfect" (p. 11).

THE EFFECT ON PARENTING PRACTICES

- The majority of Muslim parents see their child with a disability as a gift from Allah (Bonawitz, 2012)
- South Asian parents desire that professionals first look at their child's gifts rather than their deficits since their child is a gift from Allah (Jegatheesan, Miller & Fowler, 2010)
- Common for parents to take on complete responsibility and not seek help from others as their initial response (Bonawitz, 2012)

3 FACETS OF PARENTING PRACTICES AFFECTED BY PARENTS' VIEWS

Community/Family Involvement

- May keep child hidden from other Muslims because of negative attitudes
- Siblings watch out for one another
- Family members in home countries have very negative attitudes towards my child

Islamic Faith

- Other children at Mosque treat child poorly
- Limited teachings of faith – Arabic is too difficult; behaviors prevent child from being at the Mosque
- Simple prayers are taught

Educational Decisions

- Special School or General School (dependent on country and level of disability)
- IEP decisions for home involvement may be limited unless faith is considered
- Transition needs should consider faith practices

A PAKISTANI MOTHER SAYS:

"My friends adore him. BUT (emphasis from parent), I choose only people who are comfortable with him."

3 FACETS OF PARENTS DEALING WITH SERVICES FOR THEIR CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

Special Schools in UK

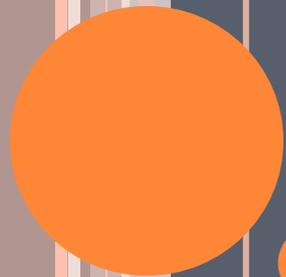
- +Great services
- +Positive relationships
- -No involvement with non-disabled children

Special Education - US

- +Many services; County and School can work together
- +Positive relationships make a big difference
- -Teachers do not understand the importance of parents' faith

Paperwork - Process

- +OK – as long as things are explained
- - Confusing; consideration of home is missing



FAITH OR CULTURE

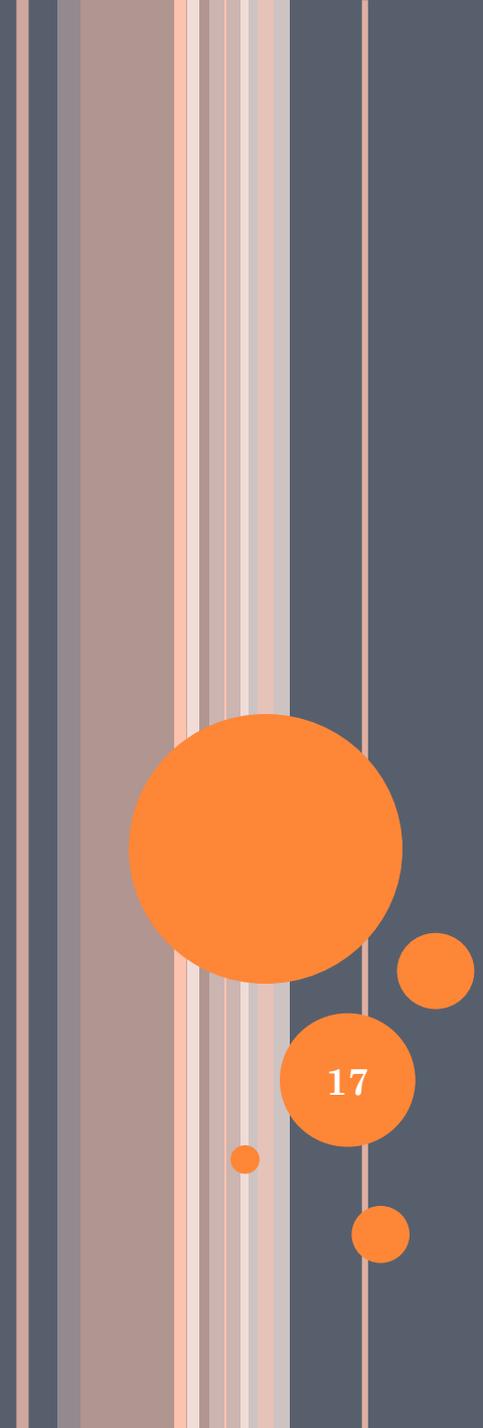
FAITH OR CULTURE?

- 5 out of 6 Pakistani parents believe their faith plays a much greater role in raising their child with a disability
- 4 out of 5 Somali parents believe faith plays a bigger role; 1 parent believes science and faith work together
- Leaders in the Somali community believe many Somalis cannot separate the two

MUSLIM PARENTS SPEAK ABOUT FAITH OR CULTURE:

Pakistani Mother: *“...completely two different things...the culture here is Indian, Chinese, and others, but faith...whatever it says is completely different than culture. This was the strength I had – my faith because it is what’s written in the Qur’an.”*

Somali Father: *“I am a man of science, but I get my strength from my faith. I can understand why my child does what she does because of science, but I am strengthened by my faith.”*



DIFFERENCES & SIMILARITIES

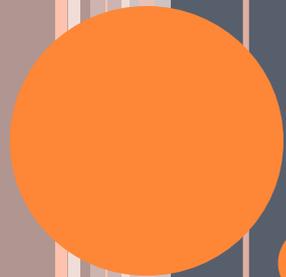
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DIFFERENCES/SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE 2 COUNTRIES

	Pakistani/UK	Somali/US
Discovery of child's disability	Accept what is; Gift from God	Gift from God; scientific knowledge important and helpful
Then what...	Need to process things – need a period of understanding	Want to know the bottom line – what kind of needs does my child have – don't sugar coat things
Available resources	Accept the resources provided – don't ask for more	Seek multiple resources for help with the child – if things are not working, ask for more
Religious leaders	Limited or no involvement by Imams	Imams accept child with a disability

DIFFERENCES ACROSS SPECTRUM OF DISABILITIES

	Mild-Moderate	Moderate – Severe
Judgment	Limited judgment from community	Significant judgment from community
Family's role	Raise child in a similar manner as other siblings –	Family helps with needs – child often remains hidden
Events	Regular involvement in family and community events	Limited or no involvement with family and community events
Future Thoughts	Have future goals for the child (ie: marriage)	Fear about the child's future (ie: no marriage)
Future Thoughts	Limited worries about who will take care of the child when parents have died	Significant worries about who will take care of the child when parents have died
Access to Islam	Faith involvement is similar to other children in family	None or limited involvement at Mosque



TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

MOVING FORWARD WITH SUPPORT



Faith Considerations

- Imams
- PACER
- Local Mosques
- Muslim handbooks

Building Relationships

- Focus on students' strengths
- Assessment steps
- Focus Groups

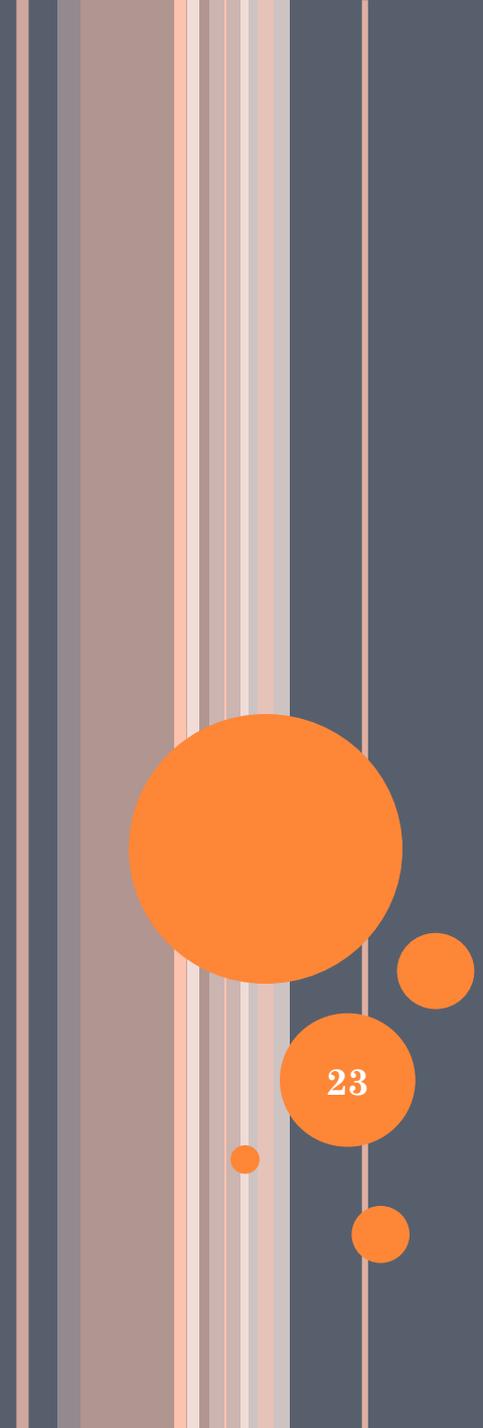
Special Considerations

- ECSE
- Transition, 14-21

A PAKISTANI MOTHER SAYS:

"How I understand my religion...he's like an angel."

*"The prayer I taught him - 'Allah is great!'
He can understand that. He can pray that.
God understands."*

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QUESTIONS?

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