

Studying Spirituality of Muslim Spouses Fighting Infertility: From Methodological Problems to Analysis of Everyday Practice

Received September 3, 2020

Revised September 28, 2020

Accepted September 29, 2020

Key words

Islam, spirituality, religious experience, infertility, concordist approach

We introduce the study of interconnectedness of spirituality and fighting infertility by Muslim spouses, which is academically new issue of existential importance. While dealing with this unique issue, we have faced several complex methodological challenges that we present and analyze. We have also found out that main literary resources of Islam consider marriage and progeny the basic religious obligations. These go beyond the private and the individual, because reproduction contributes to the growth of *ummah*, and also because infertile couples are strongly socially stigmatized. The faith of these people passes through a unique existential test and they, under the influence of success or failure of steps in gaining fertility, interpret their responsive religious experience as miraculously healing or punishing. Likewise, doctors, jurists, religious authorities and other involved helping professionals must be aware of the role and quality of their clients' spiritual condition, which can be both constructive and destructive for the outcome of the treatment as well as the overall quality of their lives.

2 Methodological Challenges

Studying our topic is meticulous work with resources from different research fields and careful picking up of scarce information that can be useful in our analysis of chosen matter. During our study we have realized several key methodological problems, which we have categorized into four following groups.

First Problem

When we focus on articles and books concerning Islamic religious context, that use the exact phrase *religious experience*, we find out, that conception of religious experience as we know it from the research of classics in the Western Psychology of Religion, as Wilhelm Wundt, Gordon Allport, William James, Charles Y. Glock or Rodney Stark, is unknown to Islamic studies. Therefore, the first problem that we identify concerning our study is terminological aspect, which does not allow us to use the phrase *religious experience* generally, with no regards to broad religious context that builds Islam. After our analysis of publications mentioned above, we are able to conclude that *religious experience* is applied to six topical areas:

- political impact of concrete religious doctrines;
- emancipation of women;
- environmental issues;
- personal responsibility towards God;
- fulfillment of religious ritual obligations known as Five Pillars of Islam;
- Sūfism.

The phrase *religious experience* has in the first case the function of the synonym of words applicability and application of religious doctrines in political, public sphere; in the second case it is a product of different interpretations of Qur'an and Sunnah in the frame of questions belonging to the discipline of Gender Studies; in the third case it describes humans' behavior regarding natural environment, that is in harmony with the doctrine of God the Creator; in the fourth case that is personal behavioral-moral profile; in the fifth case it is about religious ritual obligations, *arkān al-Islām*, i.e. *shahada*, *salat*, *zakāt*, *sawm* and *hajj*; in the sixth case it is analysis of mystical praxis of Sūfis. If we stay at linguistic research plane of the usage of the phrase *religious experience* in Islam, we can't avoid analytic philosophy of language and linguistic

turn according to Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russel, Ludwig Wittgenstein etc., which goes beyond the scope of our study.

In our study the phrase *religious experience* will be applied as "experience, acts and feelings of individual in relation to what he or she considers the divine" (James 1902, 31), thus to Allah and his obedience. As evident, we have decided to use the basis of James' definition of religious experience that we are relating to respective religion, to Islam and its monotheism.

Second Problem

Our topic of spirituality and religious experience of Muslim spouses and their fighting infertility is an unknown and totally new issue that we introduce. Interconnectedness of spirituality and religious experience of respective individuals and their efforts to overcome the state of helplessness regarding infertility has not been, up to our knowledge, considered yet. Qur'an mentions two cases of infertile pious couples: Ibrahim and Sara (51:28–30), and Zakariya and al-Yashbi' (21:89–90), so there is a strong inspiration for believers to follow the hope of the chosen couples, who were given the gift of the descendant in the time appointed by God alone, thus highly aged.

Third Problem

Monolithic and generalized approach to analysis of spirituality and religious experience connected to infertility issue in whole Islamic world is not possible, because it would be reductionistic and oversimplistic; e. g. while Iranian reproductive clinics organize at their place education of infertile couples by public transmission of gynecological surgery encompassing usage of chosen assisted reproductive technology; in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh it is unthinkable for men and women even to sit together in one room, because Muslims in Southern Asia have separate rooms for males and females; not to mention watching together gynecological surgery.

As follows, in this respect we have to consider the variety of attitudes towards women's human rights. CEDAW, as one of 10 core UN human rights instruments, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. Nearly 97% of

the world's countries are party to the Convention; those that had not ratified are the USA, Iran, Somalia and Sudan. The foundations of CEDAW trace to 1946 when The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (Cole 2016, 1–3). Regarding our topic the fifth article of this convention is essential (CEDAW 2020):

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices, which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women; (b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Higher values of violence against women are according to WHO present in Muslim countries – in Sub-Saharan Africa, the MENA region and South East Asia to 37%. Interpretations of Qur'anic texts and those recorded in Sunnah can be problematic for equality; many orthodox interpretations of Islam have discriminatory elements. Contextual factors and cultural values play a key role as well; although “Islamic reform theologians believe that the implementation of sharia law as a whole (including the Quran) could and should be newly interpreted in light of modern times.” This is the feature of the most of the other world religions, too. Hennig informs also on significant differences among respective 23 Muslim countries participating in survey of the Pew Research Center regarding perception of gender roles, obeying husband, veiling, right of women to divorce, to inherit, and have ownership rights. Islamic feminism tries to fight prejudices of an inherit discrimination of women in Islam and help to adjust the traditional role of women to changing society, which is totally different position than in case of concerns of Western feminism (Hennig 2016). On the other side, we have to point out, that not all the signs of subordination of women to men in Islam, as seen by Western world, currently are or have been in the past really unequivocal symbol of subordination. A good example could be veiling that was a significant symbol of resistance to colonialists in the past.

According to Hajjar, women's human rights that originate in other cultures or communities are by Islamic communities considered to be a constitutive part of those particular cultures or communities, something extraneous, and therefore are disadvantages, which are women of own, national area, confronted with, interpreted as specifics of their own culture, a part of own cultural heritage and national identity, and thus subsequently justified, defended or even glorified. Promotion of women's human rights is considered to be a sign of modernization that demands revision and potentially also recourse of local laws and praxis, thus, it often activates totally opposite efforts of resistance to globalization and foreign influence by defending of those cultural components, that are specific for respective own culture (Hajjar 2004, 251).

Fourth Problem

Despite of equivalency of man and woman that was appointed in the Qur'an by God's authority already in the time of the creation, religious obligations and rituals cannot be fulfilled or done by men and by women to the same degree, frequency and extent. The reasons are ritual criteria of purity, which is impossible to fulfill during the time of menstruation and childbirth. The blood makes women ritually unclean. Therefore, they are not allowed to participate during the time of the bleeding, nor at *Jummah* (Friday prayer in mosque), nor to fast (*Ramadan*), nor to attend the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). For these reasons, women tend to postpone their duty of *hajj* to later years, when they are already postmenopausal. Paradoxically, high fertility and procreation, which are so stressed by Islam, are in the cases mentioned above actually hindering women to fulfill all the prescribed religious obligations continuously and to the maximum. Older women, on the contrary, are able to fulfill their duties, but they are doing even more: in families with high social status they are organizing and hosting religious rituals and gatherings. In some world regions with strong Islamic awareness it is common for such women at home gatherings also to read from Qur'an, to preach, and to pray. Nevertheless, we can question the authenticity of spirituality, religiosity and religious experience based on strict fulfilling religious obligations; we can also polemize of their motivation. Are we dealing with genuine faith that influences and shapes every life aspect of respective person, or we are dealing with family tradition, custom, honor?

3 Discussion

3.1 Discovering the Background on Marriage and Progeny in Islam

The problem of the infertility in Islam can be discussed only in the frame of heterosexual marriage. *Nikah*, “marriage”, literally “sexual intercourse”, is an ideal stemming from the creative order in the Qur’an 25:54: “*It is He Who has created man from water: then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things).*” The Qur’anic verse 49:13 tells us that Allah created humankind from a single pair of a male and a female. They were the first married couple. In *surah An-Nisa’* (“Women”), the Qur’an 4:3 allows a Muslim man to take up to four wives at any given time provided he will be able to deal justly with all of them and take care of them. Nevertheless, this conception was broadly misused in Islamic history, while the original meaning of this guideline was to take care of widows and orphans left without husbands and fathers in the time of the wars.

The nature of Muslim marriage is contractual in form. Islam also permits divorce, *talaq*, if necessary (El Alami and Hinchcliffe 1996, 22–23). Al-Sbenaty defines Islamic marriage as follows: “*Besides the emotional involvement between the spouses, which is the most important asset in every relationship, Muslim marriage is in fact a form of an agreement or a contract by which both parties know or should know their rights and duties*” (Al-Sbenaty 2012, 22). The Prophet Muhammad once said that marriage is half of faith. That is the reason why Islam permits divorcees to remarry. The Qur’an asserts that spouses are equal, but each has competences and tasks to perform in the marriage. The husband is a provider for his wives and children. The wife is responsible for the household and upbringing of their children and satisfies her husband’s needs the same way the husband satisfies hers by providing for her. Yet, family education of children in Islam in general cannot be seen even in present time as free democratic education, which started to predominate in European culture of late 20th and early 21st century (Tůma and Holonič 2019a, 17). Nevertheless, current conclusions of Islamic educationists concur with those of Slovak researchers in education, that it is necessary to provide enough incentives in different areas of early childhood development that should be in synergy with providing enough love, acceptance, security and safety (Kostrub, Ferková, Ostradický and Tománková 2019, 148). Islam teaches that doing one’s duties and having responsibility has a positive effect on the person in bringing

reward in a form of happiness and inner peace. Indeed, there is only a small number of people whose personality attained such noble heights, or such a level of personal growth (Musawi and Mujtaha 1997, 215).

The sexual intercourse between the same sex persons is prohibited in Islam. So are incest, rape, masturbation, and adultery (Stingl 2010, 96). The latter is addressed in the Qur’an, *surah Al-Isra’* (“Children of Israel”), 17:32: “*Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil opening the road (to other evils).*”

For the sake of their children’s health, pregnant Muslim women do not have to fast; they are also exempt from this religious duty during menstruation and breastfeeding (Mawdudi 1986, 115). In Islam, children are a precious gift from God (Atighetchi, Milani and Rabello 2013), so no harm shall befall them. This idea of human as a person with dignity, which should be protected in all aspects of its existence: material, cultural and religious is indeed common to all Abrahamic religions (Baková and Holonič 2018, 5). Parents will be held accountable to Allah for the upbringing [1], *tarbiyah*, of their children (Kabir and Az-Zubair 2007, 605–609), just as the children will be held accountable for the way they treated their parents as they grew old and were no longer able to care for themselves.

3.2 Diversity of Approaches: For the Situation of the Believing Patient Even to be Harder

As Kostrub claims, multiplicity of opinions is a popular post-modern phenomenon and it is one of the new roles of the scientist to find and interpret the unifying features in the intersubjective thinking subjects, as co-creators of contemporary worlds (Kostrub 2016, 15). We follow up to this thought and state, that even if the faith of the infertile patient is strong, her/his experiences with the diversity of approaches to the problem makes them insecure and asking, what exactly Allah’s will in their situation is. When thinking about Islam, the impossibility of making universally valid claims follows from the diversity of approaches within:

a) **Sunni & Shi'a Jurisprudence.** Different concepts of marriage, for instance, have a profound influence on the permissibility of third-party donation. Initially, the use of ARTs was restricted to married couples by both Sunnis and Shi'a. Later, the Shi'a scholars extended the definition of Muslim marriage to include temporary marriage – *mut'a*, which made third-party donation possible without the worry of committing adultery – *zina* (Tremayne and Inhorn 2012, 9). Tremayne explains its practical implications (Tremayne 2012, 152):

“In the case of the wife’s infertility, the husband would marry the egg donor without any sexual contact, to receive her egg to be fertilized with his sperm. Polygyny being allowed in Islam; this would not necessarily cause any complications. But, in the case of the husband’s infertility, the wife, not being able to be married to two men at the same time, would divorce her own husband, marry the sperm donor without any sexual contact taking place, receive his sperm, and remarry the first husband. In both cases the embryo is fertilized outside the womb and planted in the uterus.”

Today, the practice of temporary marriage in Iran is less common. For Shi'a, third-party donation is not a breach of the marital contract and it is not considered adultery as long as there is no physical contact between the donor and the recipient and no illicit gaze (Tremayne 2009, 148). Surely, having such loose guidelines for third-party donation means that Iran was included among the reproductive tourism destinations, just as Lebanon (Clarke 2008, 143–169) and Dubai (Inhorn, Shrivastav and Patrizio 2012, 249–265).

b) **Madhhabs in Sunni Jurisprudence.** For instance, a list of legal requirements for a marriage contract to be valid. Al-Sbenaty argues that while all Sunni *madhhabs* require simplicity of the ceremony, they differ regarding the validity of the marital contract when not recited in the desired grammar tense: “*Shafi'i and Hanbali madhhabs allow a conclusion of marriage only if the consent to the marital contract is recited in the past tense. Maliki*

and Hanafi madhhabs stipulate that marriage is valid when recited in either the present or future tenses. It has to be clear from the recitation, however, that it is not just a promise to some future marriage or entering into a time-limited marriage.” (Al-Sbenaty 2012, 27).

Another example of variation in *madhhabs* is associated with the presence of a bride's guardian, *wali* whose role is very important, especially when a girl is married off early in her life. He is there to protect her rights. Shafi'i, Hanbali and Maliki *madhhabs* require the presence of *wali*, for the marriage contract to be valid; Hanafi *madhhab*, on the other hand, does not insist on *wali's* presence (Al-Sbenaty 2012, 37–38).

Stark difference can also be found in matters of kinship. Eich studied what Sunni *madhhabs* have to say about issues concerning kinship in relation to *zina* (adultery) and *nasab* (genealogy). When asked if *zina* causes marriage prohibitions, Hanafis and Hanbalis answered yes, while Shafi'is and Malikis answered no. When asked if *zina* establishes a *nasab* Hanafis, Shafi'is and Malikis answered no, while Hanbalis answer was yes (Eich 2012, 31).

c) **Fatwas.** Although these authoritative legal opinions distinguishing, which practices are *halal* or *haram* for today's believers are not legally binding, they still serve as such in practice. When addressing individual matters in which the personal faith merges with practice, the rulings of *muftis* are considered determinative in the absence of clear references in the Qur'an and other written sources on reproductive bioethics in Islam and they become a law for the believing Muslim. When studying individual *fatwas*, it is very important to pay attention to their issuance date and the region in which they are considered relevant and valid.

The following chronological overview of the most famous *fatwas*, issued by the Egyptian Fatwa Committee illustrates just in what radical or even antagonistic fashion a *fatwa* can change in terms of its content (Zaviš 2013a, 47):

- 28 May 1949: *Fatwa* stating that it is not a sin to reject female circumcision.
- 23 June 1951: *Fatwa* stating that female circumcision is desirable because it curbs the female nature. Medical concerns over the practice are unfounded.
- 29 January 1981: Great Sheikh of Al-Azhar, the scholar of the most famous university of the Islamic world stated that parents must follow the teachings of Muhammad and not listen to medical authorities because they later often change their minds. Parents must perform their duties and have their daughters circumcised.
- 24 June 2007: The Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gum, announced that this custom is prohibited.

Since there was a recurring theme in the Egyptian history that *fatwas*, as religious rulings, were issued by the incompetent scholars [2], who would also publish their statements in the media, the Parliament's Religious Committee in Egypt approved the new *fatwa law*, announced on 7 July 2018. The law stipulates that "Al-Azhar's preachers, scholars, teachers, instructors and clerics are only permitted to guide people in general issues, but cannot issue *fatwas*," and that "issuing *fatwas* via media outlets is regulated and limited to only accredited entities listed by the law" (Sayed 2018).

In terms of regional or district validity of *fatwas*, knowing where the *fatwa* was issued is essential. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the former republic of Yugoslavia) with most Muslims of Hanafi *madhhab*, the *fatwa* is very clear on the rules concerning the physician who will examine and treat the Muslim woman. When it is necessary for her to expose her genital area, she should choose a physician according to the following order and demand examination by:

- a Muslim female physician;
- a non-Muslim female physician;
- a Muslim male physician;
- a non-Muslim physician.

In the case of a woman's visit to the emergency department with only one doctor on duty, who happens to be a man, religious or not, the woman is excused for exposing her private parts in front of him, since there was no female doctor available. However, she must expose as small an area as necessary. Islam teaches that Allah's servers should seek medical treatment for their illnesses and not kill themselves by not

seeking any medical assistance. What is otherwise forbidden is allowed in case of necessity (Kuduzović 2015, 304–305). The Iranian government tends to take the doctor-patient gender relationship even further with an intention to ban the training of male gynecologists. Mahmoud, however, determined that Iranian and Egyptian women living in Cairo do not attach any importance to gender of the physician who examines them. "What is also relevant is that the doctor-patient gender relationship no longer appears to be contentious in Cairo or Iran, illustrated by the fact that in this study only 4% of those surveyed in Egypt and 15% in Iran requested a female physician. The large numbers of women not having any sex preference for their medical provider, though enlightening, is against the tide of current opinion among Islamic scholars" (Mahmoud 2012, 86–87).

In his fieldwork, Tappan attempted to determine the reality of following the *fatwas* in Iranians fertility clinics. His findings revealed that clinicians in practice do not equate their decisions solely with the *fatwas* but consider a wide range of bioethical sources: civil law, Western bioethical notions and *ijtihād*; it means that they go beyond the framework of Islamic law. The religious rulings of the jurists limited to saying that concrete procedure is either permitted or not, simply does not suffice in the clinical practice (Tappan 2012, 107–110).

Inhorn, Patrizio and Serour compared different approaches to third-party donation in countries with different religion of majority population, more precisely in Sunni Egypt, Catholic Italy and multi-sectarian Lebanon. They published their findings in 2010 (Inhorn, Patrizio and Serour 2010, 848–853).

- d) **Opinions of Authorities.** Chosen authorities are competent to present their opinions on certain issues in various expert interdisciplinary boards for bioethical issues, e.g. their different, often even entirely contrasting views, for instance, on cloning. Such discrepancies in opinions on cloning make it rather complicated for a lay believer to clarify his or her own personal stance on this matter since each group of experts puts forward their arguments that are presented as being in line with Allah's will, hence credible. On the other hand, the believers are very reserved and rather disapproving of radical reproductive interventions intending to assume power over life, which cloning certainly is. They believe that only Allah has the supreme power over the individual life, which in Islam is coupled with dignity and inviolability. No person, although well educated, has the right to meddle with this authority.

Another example is the divergence of opinions among countries from the EMRO [3], and countries from OIC [4] as to the United Nations Declaration on Human Cloning, which is a resolution adopted by the General Assembly in March 2005, as presented by Abdur Rab a Khayat. While Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Morocco and United Arab Emirates (all EMRO) voted in favor of this resolution as well as Albania, Benin, Guyana, Suriname and Uzbekistan (all OIC); Gabon (OIC) was against; Maldives and Turkey (both OIC) as well as Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria (all EMRO), abstained. Several OIC countries were absent, among them also Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal and Turkmenistan (Abdur Rab and Khayat 2006, 29–37).

3.3 Diseases Related to Reproductive Health as God's Punishment

While in the past there was a common explanation on trans-religious level, that diseases are God's punishment, today are religious scholars and authorities giving an accent on prevention and possibilities resulting from *synergy* of faith and science, that is *concordist approach*. From the spiritual and psychological point of view, we welcome this relief of so overall troubled infertile patients. This step reached by new theological interpretation brings the believers the feeling and the certitude of God's mercy, help and presence in all

4 Conclusion

Studying spirituality in religious experience of Muslim spouses fighting infertility is quite complex task. We have faced several methodological problems that were described, explained and systematized in form of four major principal problems including the question of conception of the phrase religious experience in the Western psychological-religious research and in Islamic studies; novelty and uniqueness of our topic of interconnectedness of religious experience of respective individuals and their efforts to overcome infertility; necessity of analysis always in respect to particular country, its customs, legalities and human rights of women; and differences in real chances of fulfilling religious obligations by men and women regarding respect towards ritual purity. Afterwards we have approached to depicting the background of our research topic, which is religious teaching on marriage and progeny in Islam. Using concrete examples of diversity of approaches to religious issues that infertile Muslim couple obeying religious guidance of scriptures and authorities has to consider, we have refuted the opinion on simplicity

their pain without a judgement. When we compare our findings from in-depth interviews done among Muslim believers in October 2018 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in May 2019 in Slovakia, we see, that Bosnian believers are much more open to this new interpretation overcoming the paradigm of the God's punishment, while Slovak believers are more conservative and still hanging to the previous model. Bosnian believers are also more prone to use different alternative health treatments, while Slovak believers have proved, that their admissibility requirements for particular methods are even stricter than those of religious authorities of their *madhhab*.

Based on this new interpretation in sense of concordist approach, selected assisted reproductive technologies are officially welcome and in the question of prevention of genetic diseases, premarital testing is in many Islamic countries like Syria, Morocco, Tunisia (Fattoum 2006, 687–696), Saudi Arabia (Al Sulaiman, Suliman, Al Mishari, Al Sawadi, and Owaidah 2008, 531–538), etc. a legal obligation. The tests are related to SCA (sickle cell anaemia), thalassemia and deficiency of G6PD (*Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase* deficiency, x-related genetic disease) (El-Hazmi, Al-Hazmi and Warsy 2011, 597–610). Incidence of both SCA and thalassemia have been in this manner reduced. Instead of emphasis of God's punishment seen in these diseases, doctors call to responsible parenthood.

of religious regulations in Islam. By the same we have also demonstrated that position of believing infertile couples is even more demanding, difficult and challenging, what forms and defines their relation to God, i.e. spirituality and religious experience as such. We have considered also the shift of the interpretation of reproductive health problems from conception of God's punishment to encouragement to think on prevention and use all the possibilities provided by modern medicine that are applied in concordance with faith. Based on our in-depth interviews among Muslim believers living in Bosnia and Herzegovina in comparison to those living in Slovakia, we could conclude, that Slovak believers are much more conservative in their praxis and theoretically hardly leaving old interpretations.

We have concluded that religious experience of infertile Muslim spouses fighting their infertility successfully could be perceived through several optics dealing with types of religious experience and types of religiosity:

a) through that Western of Glock and Stark as responsive religious experience (as one of four types including also confirming, ecstatic experience and revelation; Holm 1998, 39), where suffering person is not just the one who seeks God's help and guidance, but also the one who existentially and in the concrete receives God's responses to his/her prayers. Successful and desired outcome of fighting infertility could be seen as God's miracle; not always the rule applies that the lesser understanding of science and physiology, the bigger the accent on miraculous healing. There are some case studies in those even the best medical experts in certain area cannot understand nor scientifically explain the secret of resolving seemingly unsolvable situation or curing a hopeless health condition;

b) through that of Soroush that distinguishes pragmatic (utilitarian), gnostic and experiential Islamic religiosity (Soroush 2000). We see two possible scenarios regarding transformation of religiosity:

- reaching the stage of personal, individualistic faith and morality based on certainty of trustfulness and grace of God who cares and though changes not just the inner approach of respective person to things, situations and people, but also changes the meaning of words and conceptions used before the existential experience of fighting infertility. In terms of Soroush's types of religiosity we can speak of switch from pragmatic to experiential religiosity;
- the other outcome is being even more enrooted in pragmatic religiosity, which accentuates doctrines, rituals, practical rationality and emotions, when these elements are seen as instruments of reaching God's guidance while God being the Supervisor of everything.

Infertile Muslim couples with intrinsic religiosity (using Allport's terminology) will always search for positive outcome of situation. Even if assisted reproductive technologies do not succeed in their case, they will search further on and try to establish that kind of life that will be in concordance with God's guidance in Qur'an, Sunnah and current promulgations of religious authorities. Certain Arab countries have incorporated into their legal system also the Islamic fosterage sys-

tem, which differs from the Western conception of adoption, and is known as kafalah (Zaviš, Urbanová, Vivoda, Horáčková and Al-Sbenaty 2019, 151–168).

Extrinsic religiosity would lead to superficial and not theologically approved solution of marrying another wife, what is common praxis.

Spirituality and religiosity of Muslim spouses fighting infertility will surely be in complex, hard and long chain of medical procedures going through many changes. This is usually understood and interpreted by them as God's testing their faith.

Further, it is important to mention psychically supportive role of healthcare staff that can influence how patients at reproductive clinics or gynecological wards feel, how they perceive their religious experience and their overall perspective. Healthcare staff should be helpful in addressing the patient's spiritual and religious needs.

Reputable Indian Islamic scholar and repeatedly rewarded contributor to world peace, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, claims, that the spiritual target of Islam is a soul at rest (Qur'an 89:27). The ultimate stage in person's spiritual development is the state of peace in the soul whether having calm times or hard times of life. The integrity and inner peace are not disturbed under any circumstances; and this sublime character qualifies him/her to be ushered into Paradise (Khan 2015, 34–38). Fighting infertility may be seen as a unique path of up and downs, which reflects in deepening the relationship between believer and God, or making it more superficial, or at least anxious. In line with Khans' claims, staying peaceful in all that turmoil that infertile couples go through is a proof of religious excellence and of authentic spirituality and religious experience with lifelong consequences and impacts.

Islamic reproductive bioethics is evolving in the way of deeper understanding of experiences of infertile couples and hopefully, will soon be dealing also with the dimension of spirituality of these people. As Tůma and Holonič assume: *"Science as free and critical thinking of reality cannot be shut in outright conclusions and has to be open and susceptible. In case when science would start to reckon some conclusions as finished, there is a real danger, that it will become an ideology or implicit religion"* (Tůma and Holonič 2019b, 17).

Acknowledgement

The paper originated as a partial outcome of the project VEGA No. 1/0585/18 *Bioethics of Reproductive Health in Islam: Basis, Discussion and Challenges*, conducted at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Notes

- [1] Besides the proper upbringing that is to be in line with the teaching of the Qur'an, parents had to provide their child with education. Some of them embarked on the journey with their child to find a good teacher, while introducing them to the parts of the Qur'an that referred to the specific situation in which they happened to be at any given moment. For financial reasons parents often could not afford to provide their child with the kind of education they desired. If the child was talented, the entire community in different towns supported his study. Upbringing and education were mother's responsibility and they could sacrifice everything to fulfil that role. A great example of a strong-willed and self-giving mother was the mother of Persian Imam al-Bukhari (Zaviš 2013b, 30–32).
- [2] Incompetent scholars issuing *fatwas*. An example of this is a suspension of scholar Izzat Atiyya, the head of the Hadith Department at Al-Azhar University in 2007. He issued a controversial *fatwa* dealing with breastfeeding of adults. Lavi, research fellow at The Middle East Media Research Institute – MEMRI, summed the *fatwa* as follows: “*The fatwa stated that a woman who is required to work in private with a man not of her immediate family – a situation that is forbidden by Islamic law – can resolve the problem by breastfeeding the man, which, according to Shari'a, turns him into a member of her immediate family.*” The *fatwa* provoked public outrage. It was ordered that the issue of the government weekly AL-Watani AL-Yawm, where the *fatwa* was published, had to be removed from sellers' shelves (Lavi 2007).
- [3] EMRO: Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.
- [4] OIC: Organization of the Islamic Conference.

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