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MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE US: THE CASE OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS

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Microaggressions are covert discriminatory verbal, visual or societal/individual attitudes embedded in everyday life communications whether intentional or unintentional against a person or a group based on religious, ethnic or gender affiliations. Microaggressions degrade, marginalize and alienate the target group or person causing significant mental and physical harm to the victim. The fact that this form of discrimination is mostly hidden, common and hard to identify makes it extremely difficult for the victims to protect themselves or respond appropriately to occur. Although poorly studied, Muslim Americans are a main target for Microaggressions that is specifically intensified with the propagation of Islamaphobia. Microaggressions have three types: microassault, microinsult and micro-invalidation. The continuous exposure to these aggressive acts increases the risk for serious mental disorders with increased need for psychiatric care. Mental health professionals have to insure culture sensitive care by first and far most face their own biases and the societal influences on their practices, beliefs and ethics. Literature review of online data and research was conducted. Three books directly related to the subject were reviewed. The main objectives were to understand the forms of racial/religion discrimination impeded in American society targeting Muslim Americans, the psychological impact of microaggressions, biases in psychiatric care and ways to help this group. The literature clarified the signs and symptoms of microaggression and its impact on the affected individual as well as guidance for assisting the victims. Microaggressions are never benign or trivial. The severity of harm is explained by the constant exposure of such hidden assaults in schools, workplaces, streets, the media and everywhere else. It is a societal problem that is affecting Muslims and their children mentally and physically. Healthcare systems and mental health providers are not immune from engaging in microaggressions. They are required to understand these patterns of insults as it will cause further confusion to their patients and increase resentment and mistrust to the care they provide to this group.

BIOGRAPHY

Fatten Elkomy has completed her Medical Degree from the University of Alexandria, Egypt. She has finished three Masters Degrees in Health Administration, Health Informatics and Mental Health Nursing as well as the Doctoral Degree of Mental health nursing practice all from University of Missouri-Columbia, USA. She is a mental health provider at New Horizon's community mental health office. She is a national and international speaker.

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