

# Guidelines for Social Work Spiritual counselling in human trafficking cases

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## ABSTRACT

*People are spiritual beings and human trafficking presents grave risks to their spiritual development and well-being. Exploitation has profound consequences in the way the victim views themselves, their interaction with others and their concept of religion and/or spirituality. While trafficked victims might be physically free from situations of exploitation, a holistic approach to healing that incorporates the victim's spirituality is crucial. This paper explores spiritual well-being of trafficking survivors and outlines social work guidelines for spiritual-sensitive counselling.*

**Keywords:** spirituality, human trafficking, guidelines, counselling

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## **Introduction**

Human trafficking is complex and context specific and developing a more nuanced understanding of the issue requires a systematic, multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary approach. The multi-level risk factors for trafficking, based on the ecological framework, include but are not limited to individual, societal and public policy, community, institutional and inter-personal and relationship risk factors. According to Liao and Hong (2011), the upper layers influence the lower layers thus intensifying the issue. Several studies have provided evidence on the consequences of trafficking to include psychological/mental health, adverse behavioural outcomes, emotional wellbeing, (physical) sexual and reproductive health, and education deprivation (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019; McTavish, 2017; Rafferty, 2008; Zimmerman et. al., 2006). Generally, people's spiritual orientations and their communities can support a healing process, recovery and resilience or even make the traumatic situation worse.

Differences and tensions have been reported regarding spiritual beliefs and values in victims, between victims and professionals and this can influence counseling and other aspects of service delivery (Benson, Furman, Canda, Moss & Danbolt, 2016; Rosenfeld, Caye, Ayalon & Lahad, 2005). During the intervention process, raising issues related to spirituality with victims of trafficking can be challenging for social workers because of the complex emotions and thoughts harboured by the victims (Benson et al, 2016; Dell et al., 2017). Therefore, it is crucial that social workers take aspects of spirituality into consideration during their intervention processes, whilst investigating “modifiable factors and causal pathways that lead to trafficking in different contexts and for individual populations” (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019:1).

There is a growing body of literature that explores the role of

religion and spirituality in trauma recovery (Crisp, 2007; 2010; 2012). Arrey et al. (2016) found that spirituality was a resource for HIV-infected migrant African women living in Belgium. Shaw, Joseph and Linley (2005) and Vis and Boynton (2008) reported that spirituality can be beneficial after a traumatic experience and they further illustrated the relationship between spirituality and post-traumatic growth. Smock (2006) supports the role of religion and spirituality in peace-building. Further studies by van der Watt (2017) and Heil (2017) have also highlighted the role of religious beliefs in victim coercion in trafficking cases. In as much as the ethics guidelines formulated by the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP) refer to holistic interventions, it is not explicit about social workers considering spirituality when intervening. Nonetheless, it is crucial that social workers consider elements of religion and spirituality during their interventions. This paper is a step towards creating trafficking intervention material that is contextually relevant but with a global reach. It provides guidelines for spiritual counseling in trafficking cases. Firstly, overview of spirituality and religion is provided. Next, trafficking, religion and development are discussed. The authors then look at trafficking, trauma and spirituality. This is followed by a discussion on spirituality and social work and finally, proposed spiritually-sensitive counseling guidelines are presented.

This study draws from extant literature as insights gained from previous studies done can be useful to social workers who are intervening with victims of trafficking. A review of scientific literature was done to examine the relationship between trafficking and trauma in an attempt to develop a basic spiritual counselling guideline for social workers. In this relation, initially a search for material was done using the key words “spirituality and human trafficking”, “spiritually-sensitive social work”, “spirituality and mental health”, “spirituality and social work”

and “trauma and spirituality”. The articles were found in databases such as PubMed, Sage Journals online, ProQuest and EBSCO. The grey literature search was initially conducted in May 2017 and more in depth search carried out in July 2017, March 2018 and April 2019. It is worth noting that some articles appeared in more than one database and only articles written in English were reviewed.

## **Spirituality and Religion**

Spirituality, according to Benson et al. (2016:1373), denotes “religious and non-religious ways that people search for a sense of meaning, purpose, moral frameworks and connection with what they believe is most profound or sacred. Religion refers to organized spirituality oriented beliefs, rituals and practices shared by a community.” Spirituality can reflect an exploration for the sacred and this exploration might not necessarily take place in a religious setting, whereas religion reflects a conviction in an ultimate meaning (Meichenbaum, n.d). A person can be both spiritual and religious, or spiritual and not religious or religious and not spiritual or vice versa (Sharma, Charak & Sharma, 2009). On the other hand, both spirituality and religion can exist without each other (Farley, 2007). The concepts religion and spirituality have distinct characteristics, they also overlap, are usually used interchangeably and cannot simply be separated at all times (Arrey, Bilsen, Lacor & Deschepper, 2016; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Farley, 2007; Gillian & Furness, 2006; Kvarfordt, Sheridan & Taylor, 2018). However, although they differ slightly, they highly correlate with one another and both strongly relate to positive psychosocial functioning by acting as a moderator and a protective construct (Staton-Tindal, Duvall, Stevens-Watkins & Oser, 2013; Arrey et al., 2016). Crisp (2012) study identifies similar spirituality concepts (i.e. meaning, identity, transformation, connectedness and transcendence) to Benson et al. (2015) and to those in Canda and Furman's Operational Model

of Spirituality (as cited in Farley, 2007) which impact victims of abuse irrespective of having a religious/spiritual affiliation or not. This paper will use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably.

### **Trafficking, religion and development**

Salient examples of slavery, including trafficking as defined today, is encountered in the biblical accounts and in the antiquities in the Bible. For example when Joseph was sold to traders who were enroute Egypt and when Abraham pimped Sarah (his wife) more than once to an Egyptian Pharoah and he received compensation. Indeed, slavery also existed in many empires including that of Greek, Persian, Roman, Chinese, Arab and Ottoman. During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, more than 11 million Africans were taken into slavery. However, abolitionists such as William Wilberforce helped eradicate the slave trade. Despite numerous noble efforts worldwide over the years, millions of people continue to be trafficked annually, with high prevalence in Africa (at 7.7 per 1000 people) (ILO & Walk Free Foundation (WFF), 2017).

The violence and abuse perpetrated in trafficking has far-reaching negative consequences for victims, their families and the community. Millions of people are recruited and exploited in various activities and ways such as domestic servitude, working in cocoa plantations, mining, into the fishing industry, in sweat shops and as child soldiers, as brides and into the commercial sex industries (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017; Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). Migrants are often vulnerable to exploitation (Blanchet, Biswas, Zaman & Lucky, 2018; Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2006). The Global Estimates of Modern Slavery report states that 40 million people are victims of trafficking with 25 million being in forced labour and 15 million in forced marriages (ILO & WFF,

2017). Some forms of trafficking are state-imposed and this is then bound to hamper the achievement of employment and decent work for all as set out in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015).

According to Potrafke (2016), religion also influences economic policy-making, political institutions and human development e.g. issues related to gender equality, education system and labour market. According to ILO (2017), the vulnerability to and typology of trafficking is hugely influenced by gender. For example, a study by Zimmerman, Hossain, Yun, Roche, Morison and Watts (2006) reports that 60% of the 207 women who were interviewed for their study experienced physical and/or sexual violations before being trafficked. The role of religion in political institutions is also evident as governments in countries that are heavily Christian implement stricter anti-trafficking policies than Muslim majorities. A study by Potrafke (2017) reports that in Muslim-majority countries, discrimination of girls in the education sector is more evident, socio-political rights more suppressed, there is diminished labour market prospects and the gender earning disparity is much higher. These findings in Potrafke's (2016) study are supported by Heil's (2017) paper which argues that in Muslim-dominant countries, systems of slavery are more evident despite legislations and policies prohibiting slavery and slave-like practices. In the case of *Hadijatou Mani Koraou v The Republic of Niger* at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice, links in Islamic religion, caste system and culture were evident. Hadijatou won the case, received compensation and the court found that slavery was an illegal practice in Niger and that the state failed to protect her. Indeed, religion influences human development and as part of responding holistically to trafficked victims, this paper shows how crucial it is to respond to the spiritual needs of trafficked victims to sustain development.

Religion and spirituality are important to many people living in South Africa and Africa as a whole. Spiritual coping has been associated with people with less personal and social resources and who are likely to belong to minority groups, less educated and of a lower socio-economic status (Meichenbaum, n.d). This fits well with demographics of majority of people who get trafficked. In 2013, during his Easter Sunday address, Pope Francis acknowledged human trafficking as a form of slavery. Numerous religious and faith-based organisations in South Africa such as the Salvation Army, Gift of the Givers, the Methodist church and the Catholic church provide vital care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS, displaced populations, refugees, orphans and vulnerable children, and widows. Organisations such as Chab Dai, Caritas International, International Justice Mission and Global Freedom Network have a wider reach globally in comparison to government institutions in relation to counter-trafficking initiatives (Leary, 2018).

The contemporary spiritual practices include community development work because change is both about the internal and the external world. According to Leary (2018), the paradox of trafficking is that it is global in scope with local impact. A country's socio-economic and human development are key aspects within social work and religion can influence them. Social workers should be aware that religious traditions have a long lasting impact on contemporary social values and moral attitudes – including the victims or perpetrators of trafficking that they work with. Holistic social work orientation is encouraged in practice i.e. one that advocates for an anti-oppressive practice with the biopsychosocial and spiritual view of being a person.

## **TRAFFICKING, TRAUMA AND SPIRITUALITY**

Trauma disrupts the means by which people understand themselves and their connections to and with the outside world. Human trafficking as a form of violence does constitute traumatic events and it is usually religion that is quickly and initially embraced as a means of coping. In understanding trauma and spirituality, it is crucial to note that religion is not coercive but the interpretations of texts and teachings can be exploited and used to coerce and control (Heil, 2017). In these cases of trafficking, coercion is based on an intangible phenomenon and is not physical or obviously fraudulent as is often argued and presented as part of legal prosecutorial evidence. For example, in trafficking cases from Nigeria, witchcraft and juju rituals are tools used by traffickers (Baarda, 2016; Barrarbee, Foxcroft & Secker, 2009; van der Watt, 2017).

Exploitation impacts the victim's sense of connectedness, leaving victims psychologically numb, unable to speak (Crisp, 2012:139) and self-silenced with no room to process traumatic events (Station-Tindal et al., 2013:9). Cultures of silence discourage people from disclosing sexual abuse and exploitation and perpetrators threaten their victims if they disclose or distorts their credibility when they do. Furthermore, “many spiritual traditions promote the embracing of silence as essential for those seeking spiritual development” (Crisp, 2010:277). However, silence may not play the same beneficial role to everyone.

Spiritually, victims of trafficking seem to leave or want to leave the faith and they struggle with desire to seek God or God's will due to the notion of submission perverted through abuse (Crisp, 2012). There is loss of sense of agency and, therefore, the divine plan seems less desirable if not victimizing. In addition, the victims' perception of God is informed by traumatization and anger is directed towards God and the (mis)perception that God's distanced from them (Ross, 2016). According to Heil (2017:59-60), “rather



than assume a person can resist or walk away from their religious belief [resulting in earthly and transcendental punishment], it is more important to consider the individual...intangible coercion [i.e. the unconditional compliance to belief system] should not be so easily dismissed...as the threat is very real” to the trafficking victim. Victims go through spiritual isolation and often feel ashamed of themselves and believe that God is ashamed of them too -a damaging internalization of victimization or victim hood (Crisp, 2010; Wyckoff, 2016). Victims of trafficking also have difficulty trusting other people and God as well. For children, they tend to think of God as omniscient, able to see and know all that takes place, or as a good parent who loves his children and they, therefore, question the abuse and exploitation and why God saw their torment and did not do anything about it (Crisp, 2010). Generally, victims experience profound disconnection between belief in a Higher Being and their embodied experiences of violence and exploitation. These characteristics of trauma related to spiritual aspects are further supported by Farley (2007) and they include magnified sense of safety, personal confrontation about pain and challenged assumptions of the world, questioning purpose of life, good and evil and own responsibility.

According to Benson et al. (2016), Crisp (2012) and Meichenbaum (n.d) trauma challenges victim and their varied life perspectives - even in the absence of a spiritual belief. Thus, spirituality can contribute to understanding and managing the impact of trauma (Fallot & Blanch, 2013). The experiences of exploitation are significant for the spiritual life of any person who is a victim of trafficking (Crisp, 2012). The benefits provided by a spiritual framework as outlined by Shaw et al. (2005:2) include “having an enhanced meaning of life, increased social support, acceptance of difficulties and having a structured belief system”. This is further supported by later findings by Arrey et al. (2016) and Crisp (2012) who indicated that spiritual dimensions and key concepts such as identity, connectedness and meaning should be part of client

psychosocial wellness management.

Trauma can also result in post-traumatic growth as victims' access spiritual awareness and spiritual resources that in turn may help them develop a stronger self-identity, openness to new possibilities, different future aspirations and enhanced empathy (Fallot & Blanch, 2013; Vis & Boyton, 2008). Without taking away or minimizing traumatic experiences resulting from trafficking, inclusion of spirituality in post-trauma processes can promote growth and understanding as well as provide victims with alternatives for positive reconstruction of the world and ways of coping. Through social connectedness, the victim can appreciate and integrate trafficking experiences and nurture meaning-making. However, this is not to minimize the trafficking experience. Assigning one's trust to a fair and caring Higher Power can give trafficked victims a supportive partner. Indeed, relational and collective connectedness is crucial to the healing process as they can combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. Traumatic memories are not necessarily obstacles to be eradicated, avoided or and ran away from, but can be a bridge from the past connecting us to the present and future. These memories are not to be disremembered, but they should be contained, worked through and incorporated into one's life story. The traumatized person can move towards memory rather than beyond memory and the Bible, Torah, Quran and other holy books can be seen as motivating self-help texts that subsequently provide a framework to cope with stress.

Bryant-Davis and Wong (2013) reiterate the importance of understanding the role of and utilization of faith-based and sound spiritual strategies in communities. There are calls for acknowledgement and respect for alternative healing processes and strategies. Mental health practitioners including social workers and psychologists tend to under-estimate the importance of spirituality in coping with psychosocial challenges brought by clients and many are ill-prepared to tackle the spiritual beliefs of and with clients. Practitioners may also consciously distance

themselves from faith-based interventions for fear of losing a client from a different orientation to theirs. These could lead to situations where clients may hesitate to bring up spiritual challenges with professionals out of fear that they may not recognize or understand the value of these faith/religious-based views. In such instances, collaborations with spiritual leaders might be beneficial to the success of the intervention. Victims of trafficking should also be engaged in designing these interventions as well (Botha & Warri, 2019; Dell et al., 2017; Judge, Murphy, Hidalgo & Marcias-Konstantopoulos, 2018; Koricanac, 2013). Indeed, the impact of trauma on spirituality and vice versa shifts depending on event-time lapses, which then implies that individuals go through a process involving (re-)interpreting their experience and its connection to their beliefs (Ross, 2016). This can subsequently be a framework and can provide tools for reexamining challenges, situations and events and restructuring sense of well-being.

## **SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL WORK**

Social work researchers and practitioners recognize spirituality as a resource they can tap into for themselves and when working with their client population. Indeed, there is an increasing number of studies in spirituality worldwide and within the social work profession (Bhagwan, 2011, 2013; Crisp, 2008; Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014), in psychiatry (Koss-Chioino, 2006), in peace studies (Smock, 2006), in education (Bhagwan, 2011), on sexual trauma and survivor's spirituality (Crisp, 2007, 2010, 2012; Wyckoff, 2016) and on spirituality as a lived experience in social work practice (Lwanga, 2016). According to Oxhandler and Pargament (2014) and Lwanga (2016), using different methods and for varying purposes, social workers sometimes highlight religion and cultural practices to promote spirituality and empower individual clients and communities. Linking with an African-centred philosophy, all things are interconnected, i.e. people are spiritual and connected to

each other and to the creator. Collective identity is important when trying to understand individuals. In individuals, the body, mind and spirit are equal and interrelated. These are in line with Canda and Furman (2010, cited in Lwanga, 2016:19) who identified essential features of spirituality as connectedness, a pursuit for meaning and purpose and identity as holistic. Furthermore, there are multidimensional qualities of being human and the element of transcending Self and others. Land and landscapes are places which are considered deeply spiritual for the Khoisan in southern Africa, the Aboriginal Australians and the Native Americans for example – they are pivotal in shaping identities and give meanings (Crisp, 2008).

However, Lwanga (2016:36) observed that challenges have emanated from the “need to uphold social work and human rights values in the forefront so that traditional religious and cultural values and practices that undermine women, children and the humanity of other groups can be critiqued in a way that supports the well-being of everyone.” This is in addition to the limited efforts to develop a broad and shared conceptualization of spirituality in social work. Subsequently, from a decolonization argument, which is beyond the scope of this study but worth reflecting on, the two rhetoric questions that one may ask are: (i) could the absence of a shared spiritual understanding be another form of colonial othering and oppression? and (ii) whose spirituality is being included or excluded in the social work curriculum, training and practice?

Payne (2014, cited in Lwanga, 2016:20) notes that in as much as the area of spirituality is a critical component of social service professions, spirituality remains challenging for social workers, who often confuse it with superstition. He further identifies “nine principles that are critical in self-development for social work practitioners and their clients: accountability, equality, flexibility, complexity, caring, creativity, identity, security, and resilience.” Social workers do not need to be experts on spirituality but they

ought to respect their client's unique experiences and self-determination. Sadly, it has been observed that the resistance within social work lies in social workers not being clear regarding their own spirituality, thus ignoring or pathologizing the spiritual beliefs of their clients. The addition and inclusion of spirituality as a key area in social work faces numerous hurdles as it continues to be contested in diverse ways (Gilligan & Furness, 2006). Some of these include claims that the curriculum is already heavy and that it is incongruous with logical empiricism (Benson et al., 2016). In addition, social workers may lack agency backing, adequate training and even basic familiarity with spirituality-based intervention theories and practice activities (Gilligan & Furness, 2006) or an understanding of how spirituality links to human and socio-economic development. All in all, a cultural competent social worker should understand and appreciate the influence that faith and belief have on client and client system (Gilligan & Furness, 2006). Social work practice framed within spirituality is not about “us versus them” but incorporates awareness of inherent, interconnected, transformative relationships (Lwanga, 2016).

It should be acknowledged, though, that spiritual counseling may not be applicable to all victims. According to Bryant-Davis and Wong (2013), some victims might feel judged, excluded and rejected by the higher power which can in turn escalate anxiety and emotional pain. In other instances, spiritual arguments can also be applied in the justification and/or to excuse violence and abusive acts. In addition, when spiritually-linked violence as perpetrated by spiritual leaders is over-looked, it negatively challenges victims who want to use spirituality in their healing process, healing seems elusive and it prevents victims from changing their own lives and pattern of history (Crisp, 2010). This study further supports and calls for practice guidelines to assist individuals and families who are seeking healing from abuse perpetrated by religious leaders and in spiritual/religious spaces.

Spiritual-competent social work service should not happen by chance but should grow from a mutual professional interpretation of best practice. This means that it is a practice that is developed and implemented based on well-grounded values, integrated diverse knowledge bases and skills, and taking into account time, place and other demands (Sheridan, 2009). The services should also recognize the reality that spirituality changes at different stages in one's life and it exists even if the individual is not consciously aware of it. One question that can be asked is: how can social workers use spirituality when working with victims of trafficking? This paper attempts to contribute to shared social work understandings of interpretations of spirituality as multiple, fluid and dynamic in work with victims of trafficking.

## **PROPOSED SPIRITUALLY-SENSITIVE COUNSELLING GUIDELINES**

Trafficking cases are often invisible, they go unnoticed or take a longtime before detection due to the secretive nature of human trafficking. Once rescued, spiritual counselling can be linked to faith-based organizations that take the victims in. In some care facilities, it has been noted that spiritual counselling is usually not highlighted as part of the healing process. Thus, the development of spiritual guidelines and subsequent implementation is a move towards ensuring that trafficked victims get good-enough social work services.

Spiritually-sensitive practice, according to Benson et al. (2016:1373), “seeks to nurture persons full potential through relationships based on respectful, empathic, knowledgeable, and skillful regard for their spiritual perspectives, whether religious or non-religious.”The following guideline development was influenced by diverse insights brought together from an array of literature on spirituality. The proposed guidelines are recommendations for counseling practice with trafficked victims. However, practitioners are cautioned that these guidelines do not

and must not be substituted for thorough professional assessment, evaluation and decision-making. In addition, spiritually-based interventions must be ethical in their orientation and delivery (Sheridan, 2009).

### **Guidelines on the therapeutic approach**

- i) Create an environment that allows for spiritual exploration.
- ii) The approach should embrace exploration, transformation and partnership/alliance.
- iii) Conduct a personal spiritual self-assessment in which you (as a social worker) examine your spiritual background first (Vis & Boynton, 2008).
- iv) Social workers should briefly highlight their value system and spiritual orientation (or lack thereof) prior to engaging with clients (Benson et al., 2016).
- v) Positioning of self as a learner and not an expert is crucial to the success of the process.
- vi) Be respectful to victims' beliefs, whether or not they are shared, and accept their reality (Shaw et al., 2005).
- vii) Do not use specific religious language or concepts in the absence of clients or social workers religious background or a shared religious background (Crisp, 2008).
- viii) Be and show genuineness when exploring the victim's spiritual beliefs.
- ix) When working with children, gain assent from children and consent from guardians. Consent from adult victims of trafficking is also mandatory before proceeding.

- x) Confidentiality is important in the counselling relationship and also due to the nature of trafficking.

### **Guidelines on conducting a spiritual assessment**

- i) Assessment should be conducted to identify any links between the client's spirituality and agency service provision (Hodge, 2013).
- ii) Ask implicit assessment questions (without using the words religion or spirituality) to determine relevance to client e.g. *What gives you hope after being rescued from trafficking?*, *How do you make sense of this situation?* (Benson et al., 2016).
- iii) Undertake a spiritual strengths assessment once client's cues determine that (s)he finds spirituality to be relevant. Examples of questions to ask include: *Are there any clergy or ministers whom you would like me to contact?* or *Do you have any religious or spiritual practices which are personally important now?*
- iv) The best assessment method should be used in a given client-social worker situation(Hodge, 2005(a)(b)).
- v) The assessment should be conducted using the correct spiritual histories tools e.g. diagrammatic approaches such as spiritual ecograms, spiritual genograms, pictorial spiritual life maps and spiritual ecomaps (Hodge, 2005(a)).
- vi) The assessment methods and practices should be adapted to the victim.
- vii) The practices should flow from victim's needs and from their personal accounts based on the impact of trafficking.



- viii) Identify and apply characteristics of spiritually-sensitive helping relationship.

### **Guidelines on counselling**

- i) Listen and attend to presenting spiritual and non-spiritual themes that might be intertwined with trafficking themes.
- ii) Develop an understanding of the degree of disrupted spiritual views that have occurred as a result of the trauma.
- iii) Allow for counseling activities which support clients' self-expression and self-reflection, e.g., religious or spiritual self-reflective journaling.
- iv) Spiritual narrative construction should allow for alternative narratives which look beyond the trauma and incorporates elements from the past, present and future (Vis & Boynton, 2008).
- v) Framing of trafficking experience(s) requires that the social worker uses similar language and concepts, i.e. meaningful parallels to the client's experiences and insights.
- vi) Counselling should be conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner and client's opinion should be solicited as often as possible.
- vii) Be guided by the client victim (reflective questioning can be used).
- viii) Do not force his or her spiritual perspectives on the victim.
- ix) Use of psychosocial-spiritual language is recommended whilst exploring the victim's views on purpose in life,

*e.g., When fearful or in pain, how do you find comfort? What sustains you when you face challenges? Where do you draw your strength from?*

- x) Use optimistic or significant spiritual rituals after consulting with client. The rituals can normalize reactions and internal spiritual struggles, provide a degree of closure, encourage optimism and nurture hope.
- xi) Use spiritual-oriented methods, e.g., healing and purification ceremonies involving chanting and drumming in a cultural-sensitive manner.

### **Spiritual self-care: Victim**

- i) Assist the client to explore the worth of their participation in religious or spiritual groups and assist them to critically reflect and consider if they are helpful or harmful.
- ii) Encourage victim to get involved and participate in a spiritual support system to offset challenges such as isolation or stressful family support systems.
- iii) Encourage journaling as a way to think about alternatives to situation(s).
- iv) Assist in identification of approved and a secure place that gives them optimism, sense of meaning, makes them feel safe and offers support and well-being.
- v) Help the victim identify a suitable spiritual or religious leader who can offer comprehensive guidance and not further exploitation.
- vi) Provide victim with spiritual reading materials or guide them to safe websites.

- vii) Assist clients to identify new and positive avenues of support.
- viii) Encourage victims to engage in rituals and ceremonies which give them greater meaning and helps them cope with loss and pain.

### **Spiritual self-care: Social worker**

- i) Refer client to and/or collaborate with a skilled and insightful clergy or spiritual leader.
- ii) Referral and invitation for collaboration with spiritual leader should be based on client's approval.
- iii) On-going spiritual introspection is recommended.
- iv) Spiritual debriefing for the social worker should take place regularly.
- v) On-going training is crucial for social workers.
- vi) Up-to-date knowledge and skills on spiritual diversity and spiritual-helping strategies limit risk for harm and maintains professional and ethical standards of social work.
- vii) Social workers should research and evaluate spiritual-based helping strategies.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that spirituality is gaining momentum and it is being acknowledged and accepted within social work as being beneficial to transformation within counselling. This study adds to the limited, yet growing body of knowledge on religion within social work education and practice. The discussions have shown that it is crucial to respond to the needs to trafficked victims from a caring spiritual perspective and one that restores their dignity and self-worth, whilst acknowledging that each life is unique and sacred. Not all religions or aspects of spirituality are exploitative or victimize, exploit or abuse members. The recommended guideline is not a one-size-fits-all intervention strategy but should be adapted to the diverse spiritual environments and personalities. Drawing from a recent study by Kiss and Zimmerman (2019), further improvements to the proposed intervention guidelines can draw on and learn from spiritual and religious methods used with other risks such as violence and addictions.

Training on spirituality at under-graduate programmes in South African universities is required given the gaps in spiritual counseling and to develop competence in spiritual care. Training, advocacy and research in spiritual coping and ways that survivors have used spirituality to heal and recover are recommended. This also speaks to indigenization of social work practice in South Africa and Africa as a whole and thoughtful consideration given to societal structures and practices that facilitate trafficking and give individuals little or no choice to modify their circumstances (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019). Religious contextual issues should be considered when developing curriculum and students should be trained to work efficiently with diverse religions.

It is essential to pay attention to religious organisations working on the counter-trafficking sphere. A number of faith-based and spiritual organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Catholic

Church operate counseling centres or care facilities for victims of trafficking. However, there is no monitoring and/or evaluation reports to show effective of services to victims. If there are positive outcomes, expansion of counseling of trafficked victims within faith and spiritual based settings is encouraged as part of building social work intervention theory. This is because imminent successes in the fight against trafficking depend on academics/researchers partnering with practitioners to turn good intentions to evidence-informed practice designs. Further research on trafficking victims who abandon psychosocial counseling for spiritual reasons could also be undertaken.

In proposing a spiritually-sensitive guideline for social workers to use in trafficking cases, it is a step towards South African debates on how religious/spiritual issues can be included in social work practice. Similar to the article by Crisp (2008), certain readers may readily and critically dispute the guidelines proposed in this article as superficial and lacking depth. We humbly acknowledge that further work on spirituality in social work is needed. The guidelines are not fixed and should be adapted as appropriate to the context or trafficking case. This article also challenges social workers to acknowledge the rich insights gained from engaging with various spiritual values and debate how these knowledges (indigenous or formal) can be incorporated into South African social work interventions. This paper only offers one approach for social workers wishing to work with trafficking clients around spiritual issues and more approaches indeed need to be developed.

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