Mapping Muslim Chaplaincy: An Analytic Review of Publications between 1989 and 2023

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Abstract

This article analyses the emergent field of Muslim chaplaincy research by reviewing English-language publications in this growing area of professional religious work, especially in Europe and the United States. After presenting the method of our enquiry, we provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the literature reviewed. We then focus on three key topics in Muslim Chaplaincy Studies that derive from our quantitative and qualitative research. These are: the training of Muslim chaplains, which is strongly linked to professionalisation, the vocabulary and sources that underpin Muslim chaplaincy and, finally, the significance of the increasing involvement of Muslim women in this area of professional religious work and leadership. Having identified exactly 100 publications related to the development of Muslim chaplaincy, many of them arising from empirical research, serious practitioner reflections located

in peer-review publications, and a small number of articles that are explicitly devoted to methodological considerations, we are suggesting in this article that a distinctive sub-field of *Muslim Chaplaincy Studies* can now be identified.

Keywords

chaplaincy – Muslim – gender – women – research – training – professionalisation

1   Introduction

While Muslim chaplaincy can still be called "an emerging profession" (Long and Ansari 2018 109), it has nevertheless developed in significant ways, especially since the 1990s, when public institutions such as prisons and hospitals recognised the need to provide pastoral care that reflected growing religious diversity (Beckford and Gilliat 1998; Gilliat-Ray 2000; Kirkwood 2001). Although the extent of development is uneven across different European and Western societies, a new field of research is arguably taking shape, namely "Muslim Chaplaincy Studies". Where the terms Muslim "chaplain" and "chaplaincy" were initially unfamiliar for Muslim service-users (often being associated with "Christian proselytization" (Hamza 2007 75) they are now largely accepted by both practitioners and researchers. 'Islamic counselling' takes place in a therapeutic setting and is largely directed towards individuals (Abu-Raiya 2015; Bagasra 2020; Rassool 2016), while the activity of imams is predominantly community and congregation orientated (Barton 1986; Gilliat-Ray 2010b). In contrast, Muslim chaplaincy work largely takes place within the confines of various public institutions (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013). Although the terms "counsellor", "imam" and "chaplain" have sometimes been used interchangeably as a reflection of varying discourses in European/Western societies (Baig 2012; Rhazzali 2015; Smajic 2020; Willander et al. 2019), alongside the hybrid term "imam-chaplain" (Brylov 2020), in this article we focus exclusively on Muslim chaplaincy, leaving aside wider research literature concerned with Islamic counselling and the work of imams.

Before the formal appointment of chaplains, some of the earliest writing about Muslim involvement in chaplaincy work, especially in relation to healthcare, was authored by Muslim doctors who found themselves being drawn into pastoral care of patients as an extension of their medical role (Sheikh and Gatrad 2000). Another early genre of writing reflected the work of Christian chaplains writing what we might call "how-to" books, intended to help their

Christian colleagues meet the pastoral care needs of Muslim patients or prisoners (Kirkwood 2001). This genre was soon followed by "how-to" books authored by some of the first Muslims working as chaplains, explaining how non-Muslims involved in pastoral care might provide religious and spiritual care for Muslim clients (Tuell 2010).

Muslim chaplaincy work is of course situated within wider fields of care. Thus, 'pastoral care' (Ansari 2009; Long and Ansari 2018) is often linked with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as a part of chaplaincy training, especially in the US context. Meanwhile, the term 'spiritual care' (Baig 2023; Ibrahim 2023; Isgandarova 2011b; Jamil 2022) is frequently used synonymously in discussions about chaplaincy. Where the literature uses these terms with specific reference to institutionally based Muslim chaplaincy work, we have included it in our mapping work. We have also been alert to the emergence of writing about Muslim chaplaincy within the context of a much larger body of literature about religious diversity in public institutions, and interfaith approaches to chaplaincy more widely (Liefbroer et al. 2017). We have likewise taken account of this body of writing in our research.

Chaplaincy in public institutions is situated at the interface between the secular and religious spheres and can be related to the topic of governance of religious diversity. There are a number of publications that explore this issue, using the work of Muslim chaplains as an example of the challenges and implications of increasing religious diversity in public life and institutions (Christensen et al. 2020; Furseth and Kühle 2011; Nordin 2018). We are interested in this literature since state governance and its implications significantly contribute to shaping the field of Muslim chaplaincy. However, it is important to note that chaplains also have the opportunity to "counterbalance the sometimes understandable but one-sided approach of the state in a period of securitization, and to play a critical role" (Vellenga and De Groot 2019 234). In other words, Muslim chaplains can exercise considerable agency in their work, and this can find expression in writing that contributes to the emergent field of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies.

Having established the broad background out of which our mapping of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies has emerged, this article presents the current state of research in this field by reviewing English-language publications. We begin by documenting the methodology underpinning this article, and this is followed by a quantitative and qualitative overview of the literature reviewed. We then consider three key topics that have emerged from our mapping exercise as significant areas of research, namely, the training of Muslim chaplains (which is strongly linked to professionalisation), the vocabulary and sources underpinning Muslim chaplaincy practice, and the significance of chaplaincy

as an arena of work that enables Muslim women to take leading roles as religious professionals. We conclude by identifying prospects and opportunities for future research.

2   Methodology

For most of a week in May 2023 the authors met together, surrounding themselves with hard copies of all publications considered relevant to undertake a "mapping" of the literature about Muslim chaplaincy. But some important preliminary work had been done before our physical meeting. Given our extensive collective experience of conducting research about chaplaincy since the 1990s, we first began by sharing our respective personal databases accumulated over more than 25 years and held on bibliographic software such as EndNote and gathered via databases such as Scopus. This was followed by further new searches on Google Scholar, using relevant search terms and phrases and combining words such as Muslim, Islamic, Islam, chaplain, chaplaincy, pastoral, and so on, using wildcards to ensure we identified derived words. However, we were mindful that some of the terminology around Muslim chaplaincy can be Eurocentric, and so we tried to ensure that our searches covered a breadth of potentially relevant vocabulary. This means that, by the time we met, we had a comprehensive list of exactly 100 references.

Early in our discussions, we had to make decisions about the criteria for including publications in our working database. Would we include publications in languages other than English? To what extent would we include writing about Islamic counselling, social work, or general Islamic spiritual care beyond institutional contexts? These discussions were not simply about process but also served as a catalyst for thinking about "what counts" as Muslim chaplaincy and the ways in which it can be distinguished from other related, but nonetheless distinctive, forms of professional caring religious interventions. Our concentration on institutionally based religious and spiritual care enabled us to remain focussed.

Given that a considerable body of writing about Muslim chaplaincy is written in English, we decided to focus on English-language publications only. We were aware of a body of writing in other languages (e.g. French and German) but this literature does not typically relate to the evolving wider international discourse about Muslim chaplaincy, which is predominantly written in English. In recent German publications on Muslim chaplaincy, a strong theological focus is evident (Abdallah 2022; Badawia et al. 2020; Takim 2019). This is a result of the establishment of Islamic-theological studies at German-speaking universities. However, relatively little empirical research on Muslim chaplaincy has

been published in German and, for us, some theological reflections appeared entirely detached from chaplaincy practice. In French-language publications, writing about Muslim chaplaincy is focused mainly on the prison context and even then, with particular attention to issues around radicalisation. This reflects French political life and culture shaped by the policy of laïcité, and a concern to prevent religious extremism in public spaces (Béraud and de Galembert 2019; de Galembert 2022; Kervyn de Meerendré 2022).

Although our research indicated the overwhelming strength of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies in North America, Canada and to some extent in the UK, we felt it was important to include and take account of writing about Muslim chaplaincy in the English language deriving from much smaller European countries, such as Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. Publications appearing in these geographically smaller countries are nevertheless part of an emerging transnational field of study that is being articulated in the English language. Our mapping work would have been incomplete if these works had been omitted from the overall picture. The smaller pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are as important as the larger pieces if the whole image is to be seen clearly. Furthermore, the development of Muslim chaplaincy as a field of practice (and thus of subsequent research) is a lens through which to examine the outcomes of varying arrangements for religion in public life and institutions that reflect distinct cultures, histories and policies for the incorporation of religious minorities. The development of the field is also likely to reflect varying transnational research priorities, funding opportunities and infrastructures. What is regarded as "fundable" research in one country is likely to differ in another, and this will also have some impact on the development of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies. In addition, the degree to which Muslims have been incorporated into chaplaincy can also provide a lens through which to learn something about the particular character, priorities and development of Muslim minority communities themselves. As Pattison argues:

> Chaplaincy is a microcosm of the wider world and society in which many issues and factors are magnified and can be closely examined in a very particular context […] it provides a kind of crucible where faith, theology, human need, values, communities, organisations, individuals and cultures intersect with each other in dynamic ways, exposing assumptions, continuities and discontinuities, connections and disconnections, of practice and belief. If one wants to understand the place of religion in society, the ways that secular and religious values about equality or illness intersect, the nature of professions, or the way that public services are evolving, there is no better place to look than into the world of chaplaincy. (Pattison 2014 xiv)

Having undertaken a mapping of the emergent field of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies research, there is clearly scope for future international comparative work to determine in more detail how the political, social, geographic, academic and religious contexts in different societies provide (or do not provide) a hospitable environment for the growth and flourishing of Muslim chaplaincy practice and subsequent publishable research.

We included all articles written by Muslim chaplaincy practitioners, but omitted practitioner writing that was non-academic, or not academically-informed. We sometimes had to make a judgement call about where to draw the line between these, but we found the extent of analytical evaluation of practice – as opposed to mere description – a helpful guide in making the distinction.

In some countries, institutional chaplaincy is delivered as part of generic spiritual care (Inniger 2017). In these situations, publications that reflect the particular experiences of Muslims working as chaplains, or the emergence of "Muslim chaplaincy" as a distinctive practice, may be harder to identify. However, our collective familiarity with the broader literature in the field of Chaplaincy Studies was helpful here in ensuring that we covered all relevant material (Swift et al. 2015).

There is a growing literature in the field of Islamic counselling and social work, but we only included publications in these fields if they related to institutional chaplaincy in some way. Some web-based articles for which we had hard copies were no longer available online and their lack of public availability was a reason for us to exclude them. We were aware of a body of literature where discussion of Islam and Muslims in institutional contexts (e.g. caring for Muslim patients in hospital) might have been included – such as the "how-to" books authored by Muslim doctors noted above (Sheikh and Gatrad 2000), but if they included little or no reference to chaplains or chaplaincy work, we also omitted these publications from our database.

We created an Excel spreadsheet to record basic information about each publication relevant to our project in the following fields: author, title, year of publication, type of publication (book chapter, article, monograph, doctoral thesis,) name of journal, methodology (e.g. case studies, reflection on practice), author identity (e.g. practitioner/chaplain, researcher/academic, and in some cases chaplaincy practitioners who are also researchers/academics), author/s main disciplinary background (e.g. social work, sociology of religion, psychotherapy, Islamic Studies, medicine, anthropology, theology), keywords, main contribution, country of publication, sector (e.g. prison, hospital, multi-sector), and topic. The last field provided an organising principle for dividing up the literature, with each of us leading on the reading of material, and subsequent

writing about topics reflecting our individual expertise. We shared the reading of publications that covered other additional topics, such as gender, interfaith relations, organisations, diversity, self-reflection, service-users, and so on. At regular intervals, we paused our reading for discussion and reverted to making notes about the main points arising from the reading we had done. By Day 4 of our work together, we had read everything and reached a point of "thematic saturation" and could be confident that we had undertaken a comprehensive scoping of the current state of the field of Muslim chaplaincy research and literature.

Before concluding this section, it is important to note the significance of an edited collection published in 2022 entitled *Mantle of Mercy: Islamic Chaplaincy in North America* (Ali et al. 2022). The 32 chapters in this publication are largely "practitioner reflections" that document the experiences of chaplains working in different sectors, and with Muslims from different "schools of thought". Many of the chapters are quite descriptive, while others are more analytical. For our purposes, rather than counting each chapter as an individual contribution to our database (or making a decision about which ones we might regard as academic, or "academically-informed"), we decided to regard this book as a single publication. The important point about *Mantle of Mercy* is the way that it reflects the growing critical mass of practitioners of Muslim chaplaincy in the US who bring diverse identities and experiences to the field. By documenting their experiences of becoming chaplains and exercising the role, this volume helps to record pioneering work in practice that would otherwise remain largely invisible.

3 Overview of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies Literature

Overall, we identified 100 titles published between 1989 and May 2023 (see Table 1). There were very few publications before 2009, but the growth since then is indicative of the growing importance of the research field, though we might not yet regard it as a stable, incremental pattern of growth.

Concerning the type of publication (see Table 2), chapters in edited volumes and journal articles predominate. The category "miscellaneous" comprises semi-academic short papers some of which are published in periodical-type journals (as opposed to more academically-orientated peer-reviewed journals) (Abu-Shamsieh 2013; Ahmad 2011; Kholaki 2023; Rabbi 2022a; Rabbi 2022b; Tarleton et al. 2003) and online conference papers (Cooper 2008; Haddara 2020; Long et al. unknown date; Muhammad 2020) as well as studies that have not been published in journals (Abu-Ras 2010; Bock 1998; Khoja-Moolji 2011).

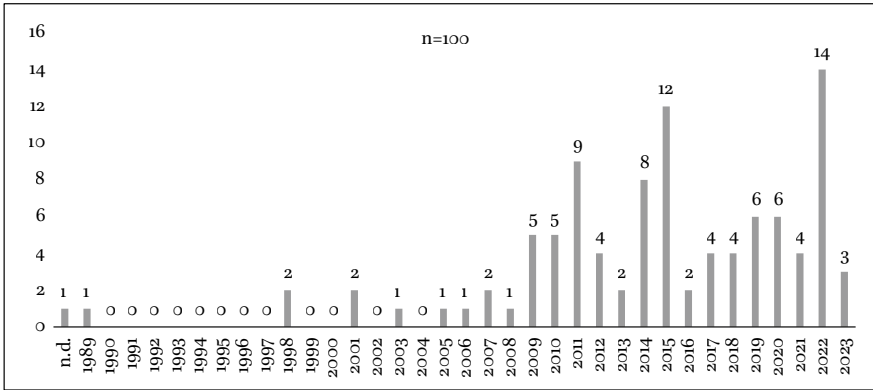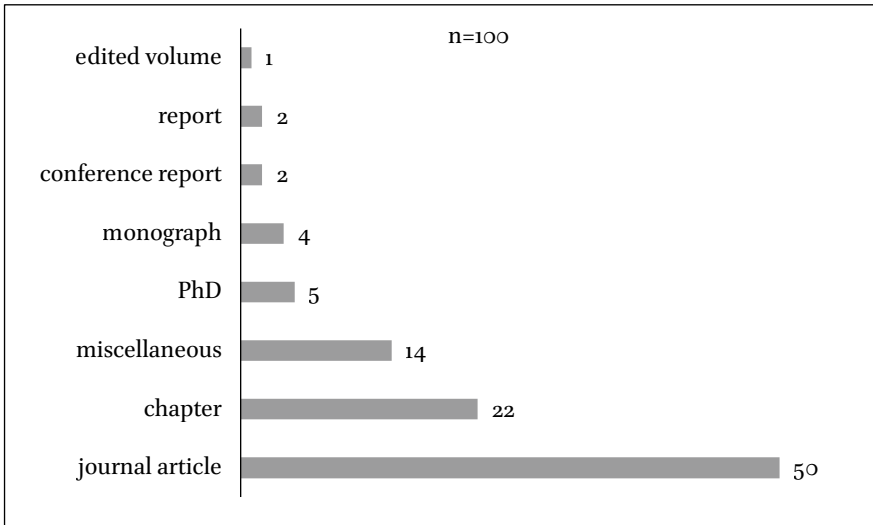TABLE 1   Number of publications per year

TABLE 2   Number of publications per type

The fact that there are only two published academic monographs based on extensive empirical research (Ajouaou 2014; Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013) and five unpublished PhD theses (Edward Jones 1989; Isgandarova 2011b; Jalalzai 2016; Kassam-Remtullah 2012; Stark 2015) is indicative of the potential for future research. We found only one PhD thesis that has gone forward for academic publication (Ajouaou 2014). Two reports provide programmatic assessments of Muslim chaplaincy combined with recommendations (Mughal 2010; Siddiqui

2007). Finally, it is noticeable that there is only one edited volume (*Mantle of Mercy*) solely concerned with Muslim chaplaincy (Ali et al. 2022).

Journal articles about Muslim chaplaincy have been published in a wide range of international peer-review journals, the most frequent being: *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counselling* (6); *Journal of Religion and Health* (5); *Journal of Pastoral Theology* (4); *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* (3); and *Religion, State and Society* (3). This shows that there is not yet a specific publication platform for Muslim Chaplaincy Studies (Ansari 2022b 74) and it is integrated into the broader fields of pastoral and spiritual care, religion and health, religion in public life, and so on. The acceptance of articles about Muslim chaplaincy in established journals in these fields is indicative of how discourses that were once almost entirely shaped by Christian perspectives are now being developed by new contributions derived from the experiences of Muslim chaplains. In the Conclusion to this article, we suggest this is a positive development that augurs well for the future of Chaplaincy Studies as a whole.

The work of Muslim chaplains is now becoming evident in "Handbook" volumes concerned with broad topics such as "Religion and Gender" (Jalalzai 2020), "Religion and Medicine" (Laird et al. 2021) and "Islam in the West" (Yuskaev and Stark 2022). As more international academic conferences are being held on the topic of Muslim Chaplaincy, published reports from these meetings signal the developing research field, and provide scope for comparative perspectives between countries (Calisir et al. 2019; Jamil 2022).

A characteristic genre for chaplaincy as a practical field is short papers written by practitioners, either in "special issues" of existing publications (Abu-Shamsieh 2013; Ahmad 2011; Kholaki 2023; Rabbi 2022a; Rabbi 2022b), or more recently, for example, in the anthology, *Mantle of Mercy* (Ali et al. 2022).

While many publications are authored by either academic researchers or chaplains, there is an important category of "research-active" chaplains who can bridge the gap between practice and theoretical reflection. We identified 27 papers authored by these "chaplain-researchers" (den Toom 2020 202). However, when we cross-tabulated the categories "empirical research" with "qualification" in our Excel spreadsheet, it appeared that only 6 papers reflected the work of "chaplain-researchers" engaged in generating *new empirical data*. Thus, there is a need to develop the research capacity of Muslim chaplains (Ansari, 2022b: 74). The authors of the publications in our database represent a large spectrum of disciplines comprising mainly anthropology, Islamic Studies, medicine, psychology, psychotherapy, religious studies, social work, sociology and theology. Yet many approaches can be characterised as interdisciplinary. Some authors note the necessity for interdisciplinarity in Muslim chaplaincy studies, as the following quotation makes evident.
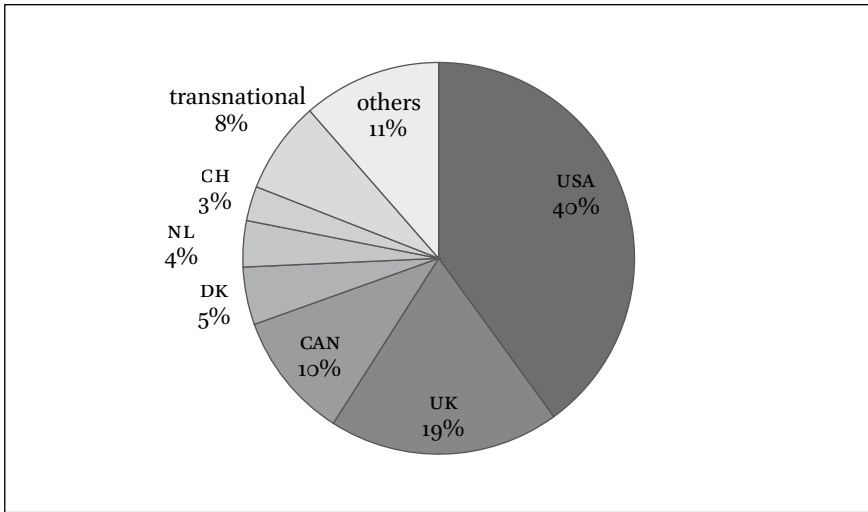
The relevance of Islamic spiritual care, its content and definitions cannot be understated since their theological foundations, that go back to Islam's early history, are brought into dialogue with prevalent practices and social sciences of today in a variety of ways. (Baig 2023 100)

However, reluctance by imams and spiritual care givers to engage with social sciences has been noted (in the Canadian context) (Isgandarova and O'Connor 2012 6) but whether this remains true a decade later and is applicable to other societies remains to be seen.

In our research, we sought to "map" the emerging literature about Muslim chaplaincy geographically (see Table 3). In most cases, but not all, the country of publication was the same as the country in which the research had been conducted. The strength of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies in North America and some European countries is quite evident, reflecting the growth of this sphere of religious work in these societies in recent decades (Jalalzai 2020 214). Some publications with a transnational focus are deliberately comparative (Beckford and Cairns 2015).

Our focus on English language publications had an impact on the spectrum of countries reflected in our "mapping" exercise. In the Netherlands and in Scandinavia, English is widely used in writing about Muslim chaplaincy but, as noted above, this is less the case in France and Germany. Eastern European countries are relatively weakly represented in the literature about Muslim chaplaincy (Brylov 2020; Smajic 2020), likewise for Southern European

TABLE 4   Sectors of chaplaincy as a focus of the publication
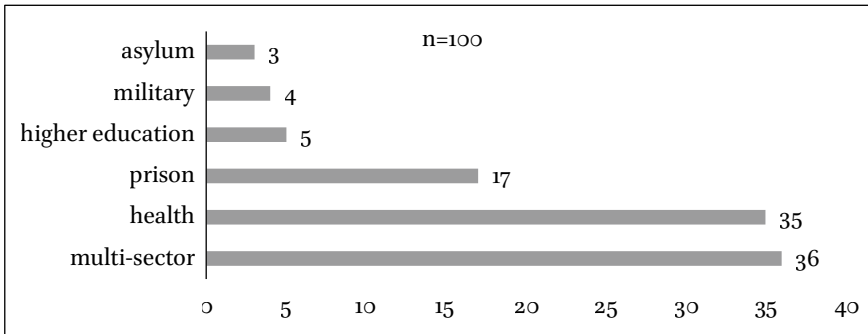
countries (Rhazzali 2015). This reflects the relatively slow growth of Muslim chaplaincy work in these countries compared with others, with obvious consequences for research. Our exploration of the literature through the lens of geography revealed some further interesting trends. For example, US Muslim chaplains have been active contributors to discussions about theological matters. In contrast, although Muslim chaplaincy is now well-established in the UK, virtually all the literature is sociological in nature. We found only six publications authored (or co-authored) by Muslims who had been, or were still, research-active (Ali and Gilliat-Ray 2012; Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013; Gilliat-Ray and Arshad 2015; Hafiz 2015; Omar 2015; Rajput 2022), and in nearly all these publications, relatively little attention is given to theological matters. We explore why there might be a difference between the US and UK later in this article.

A large number of publications discuss the significance of Muslim chaplaincy beyond any particular sector, often as part of an effort to legitimise the emergence and worth of the profession (see Table 4). Since Muslim chaplains are often working alongside other secular professionals, especially in the fields of medicine and health, it is unsurprising that they wish to assert the value and "professional" qualities of their role. The research culture that typically surrounds medical and educational settings makes these hospitable contexts for developing research by Muslim chaplains. Although military and prison chaplaincy are well established sectors, their lack of a surrounding "research culture" can inhibit the progress of research about chaplaincy *per se*, let alone Muslim chaplaincy.

Our mapping exercise identified some new areas of Chaplaincy Studies, such as asylum chaplaincy, which is beginning to reflect the involvement of Muslims (Kimball et al. 2023; Schmid 2020; Schmid and Sheikhzadegan 2020). Post COVID-19, the growth of online/telechaplaincy (Sprik et al. 2022) is yet to be reflected in the Muslim Chaplaincy Studies literature. This suggests that, in

many cases, basic research is still being done in a relatively new field of practice, meaning there is less focus on more experimental topics.

It can be difficult to quantify an essentially qualitative practice (Kevern and McSherry 2015) and so, unsurprisingly, there are few publications that rely entirely on quantitative research. There are a greater number of mixed-methods papers, and substantial contributions that we could describe as "practitioner reflections". The limited number of papers that *explicitly* focus on methodology for researching Muslim chaplaincy (Gilliat-Ray 2010a; Gilliat-Ray 2011; Omar 2015) in many ways mirrors the wider Chaplaincy Studies field.

Against this description of the broad landscape of Muslim Chaplaincy literature, we now turn to three predominant topics that were substantial themes in the published material we reviewed, beginning with the subject of training and professionalisation.

4   Training

Muslim chaplaincy in most European and Western societies started with pioneering volunteers who "learnt on the job" (Asri 2015 48). Muslim doctors sometimes found themselves taking on pastoral roles as an extension of their medical work. Prisons called local mosques, in the hope that the imam might begin to visit prisoners. Few, if any, of these early pioneers were qualified as chaplains, and most likely did not think of themselves as "chaplains". Indeed, in the UK, the first Muslim "chaplains" often had the title 'Visiting Minister' (Beckford and Gilliat 1998) a term indicative of their transitory and partial involvement in the life of the institution. Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, when Muslim involvement in institutional chaplaincy started to evolve, there were no dedicated training institutions (Salem 2022). A deficit-orientated perspective on Muslim chaplaincy training is evident in some of the literature we surveyed; a sense that Muslims are "lagging behind in comparison to the spiritual care in other traditions, particularly the Christian and Jewish ones" (Isgandarova 2018 354).

By 2019, the situation could not be more different. As Muslim involvement in chaplaincy has developed from volunteer, to part-time, and then to more full-time engagements (as well as some Muslim chaplains assuming lead roles in chaplaincy departments), there has been a simultaneous development of infrastructures for training and research. An international conference on Muslim chaplaincy in 2019 noted that "funding, training and supervision of Muslim chaplains turned out to be key points of interest" (Calisir et al.

2019 8). As the availability of paid positions in the "chaplaincy labour market" (Vinding 2021 3) has grown, so too has the demand for training.

Muslim chaplaincy training overlaps with training for other Muslim religious professionals, especially imams (Laird et al. 2021 204), but of course has a specific focus. There seems to be a consensus in the literature that Muslim chaplains need multiple competences in Islamic theology (Mayberry 2019 3) and a range of soft skills such as counselling (Rajput 2022 97), familiarity with social sciences (Isgandarova 2011a 11), and an appreciation of the norms that shape professional work in diverse, multi-faith contexts (Levine 2009 146). The need for a reflective theological approach is highlighted so that chaplains can go "beyond the permissible/impermissible discourse" (Isgandarova 2018 360). This requires a contextual approach realising "the importance of '*urf*' (accepted norms) and '*adah*' (customs and practices) of the place one is ministering in" (Hafiz 2015 95). Especially in the US, clinical pastoral education (CPE) is seen as key to acquisition of pastoral competences (Abu-Ras 2010 9). A study with Muslim CPE students shows their growing "self-awareness" as a result of their exposure to CPE (Jamal and Isgandarova 2021 169), which often incorporates experiential field placements (Isgandarova 2018 356). While CPE is common in North America, it is less evident in Europe, where tools and approaches to Muslim chaplaincy are both less developed, and more diverse as a reflection of the variety of institutional, financial and political arrangements for chaplaincy and religion in public life.

Muslim chaplaincy literature reflects different positions in a wider international debate about the extent to which chaplaincy training and practice should be embedded within generic, interreligious approaches to institutional spiritual care, or whether it should be more specifically orientated towards particular religious groups. Within this debate, Nazila Isgandarova is an advocate of Islamic spiritual care that is *both* "grounded in the Islamic tradition and the transformative learning process of CPE" (Isgandarova 2018 349). She recognises that successful CPE enables Muslim chaplains to operate in an interreligious context that promotes integration rather than segregation (ibid.: 358), while also meeting specific Muslim needs. In the UK context, the limited availability of CPE has perhaps shaped contrasting perspectives. For example, Asgar Rajput advocates an approach focused more on the specific needs of Muslim service-users as the starting point with a "Muslim-centric problem-centred curriculum that identifies the lived experience and needs of the Muslim community" (Rajput 2022 93). While acknowledging the need for Muslim chaplains to acquire other knowledge and skills such as counselling, coaching and an understanding of mental health, he is critical of chaplaincy training that originates from Christian approaches and merely seeks to "Islamise" it.

Beyond a consensus in the literature on the need for qualifications and supervision of Muslim chaplains, there is a wide variety of training approaches and institutions. In most countries, there is still little or no standardisation (Calisir et al. 2019 15). This is a reflection of the various ways that legal and institutional arrangements, and historic precedents, have shaped the field and assumptions about training (Ajouaou and Bernts 2014). Standardisation is also linked to state funding. The more the State invests in the funding of chaplaincy personnel, the more standardisation is required (Laird et al. 2021 201). Sometimes chaplaincy training is state sponsored (ibid.: 207). In countries with formal state recognition of religious communities, such as Belgium, the state provides authorisation for chaplains and also supports training courses (Asri 2015 47–8). According to Bilal Ansari (2022b: 74), Muslim chaplaincy leaders should "have a place at the table of professional organizations and institutions" that shape chaplaincy arrangements and training.

Training institutions play a key role in setting up accredited courses and developing further research. Although there are now several Muslim chaplaincy courses in the United States, perhaps the best known and most well-established is Hartford Seminary (now Hartford International University for Religion and Peace), which started its chaplaincy programme in 1999. Its MA programme in chaplaincy with an option to specialise in Islamic chaplaincy has played a pioneering role in establishing "an educational rubric for the training and professionalisation of Muslim chaplains" (Yuskaev and Stark 2014 6). Hartford has been a catalyst for developing a body of research that underpins Muslim Chaplaincy Studies, with some of the leading authors in this field having prior or current links with it (Ali et al. 2022; Ansari 2009; Kowalski and Becker 2014; Long and Ansari 2018). Vinding (2021: 14) argues that Hartford is a "uniquely American model" (Vinding 2021 14, citing Grewal & Coolidge, 2013), as a consequence of the convergence of "student interests, educational content and employer expectations" (ibid.: 13) alongside the incorporation of learning objectives shaped by the Association of Professional Chaplains. Over the years, feedback from Hartford alumni has played an important role in course re-design.

In the United Kingdom, the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) set up a Certificate in Muslim Chaplaincy course in 2003, and it continues to be delivered annually. However, some question whether the requirements for admission are too low (Hafiz 2015 94). Although there is now an option to progress to an MA in Islam and Pastoral Care, MIHE has failed thus far to produce any substantial research to underpin the emerging Muslim Chaplaincy Studies field.

It is understandable that the development of training programmes and basic organisational structures for Muslim chaplaincy was a priority in the

early days of the role, but the literature we surveyed captured the fact that, as the critical mass of experienced Muslim chaplains has grown, so too have the opportunities for mentoring and supervision (Ibrahim 2023 100) and continuing professional development (CPD). Chaplains who are willing to share their experiences appear to be offering particularly valuable CPD (Levine 2009 147). Furthermore, the growing availability of mentors in many ways marks an important milestone in the development of Muslim chaplaincy; it reflects a shift that enables chaplains to move from fulfilling basic pastoral duties to becoming reflective practitioners with a much stronger "professional" identity. The first national survey of Muslim chaplains in the US found that chaplains desire "sharing experiences with other chaplains [...] more training in 'skills and techniques,' but also deeper grounding in Islamic spirituality and theology" (Laird and Majid 2019 3–4). The survey found that chaplains had various opportunities for continuing professional education, though knowledge about funding (or the willingness of employers to support CPD) might limit the degree to which Muslim chaplains could take advantage of further skills development (ibid.: 8–21).

Thus far, the Muslim Chaplaincy Studies literature has given limited attention to the way in which chaplaincy might reflect the internal diversity of Muslim communities. The report compiled by the Association of Muslim Chaplains in the US in 2019 noted that in future, more effort should be given "to recruit Shi'i and other minority community chaplains" (Laird and Majid 2019 23). This is echoed by Nazila Isgandarova and Thomas O'Connor (2012: 5), who note that "Shia and Sunni branches of Islam have extremely different views on Islamic spiritual care". The prevailing person-centred approach in chaplaincy, which focusses on individual needs, might be a reason why this dimension has been neglected. In the US context, there is typically a "one size fits all" (Abu-Ras and Laird 2010 55) approach to chaplaincy services. This can be ill-suited to meeting the needs of Muslims who are seeking religious and spiritual care that reflects their particular "school of thought". The anthology *Mantle of Mercy* is an important publication in this respect for the way in which several chapters offer Shi'a perspectives (Ali 2022b), or note the significance and issues arising from intra-faith diversity (Abdur-Rashid 2022; Ali 2022a).

5   The Vocabulary and Sources for Muslim Chaplaincy

Given the origins of chaplaincy from within the Christian tradition, the incorporation of Muslims into this sphere of religious work raises inevitable questions about terminology and the appropriate religious and scriptural "anchoring" of Muslim chaplaincy work. Our literature review identified some

interesting questions along these lines, all of which are indicative of how to frame and explain an emergent profession. These included questions about the nature of pastoral theology, the extent to which chaplains are "doing theology" in their work, and issues around the justification for Muslim chaplaincy in Islamic scriptures. What constitutes "good practice" in Muslim chaplaincy – from a theological perspective – and what Islamic sources should chaplains be drawing upon in their work? The following paragraphs explore how some of these questions are debated in the literature we surveyed, beginning with the issue of vocabulary.

In his PhD research, Harvey Stark (2015) explored the meaning of the word "theology" in relation to the work of Muslim chaplains. To what extent are they using terminology borrowed from their Christian colleagues as a way of establishing their mutual professional equivalence (ibid.: 47)? Do they think of themselves as "theologians"? Stark's research found that, while Muslim chaplains regarded themselves as people who "do theology", this is not the same as being "a theologian", a term they reserved for classical dialectical theology (*'ilm al-kalam*). In contrast to their Christian colleagues, when it comes to "pastoral theology", Muslim chaplains typically need to have some regard for religious law, though the degree to which this occurs seems to vary either side of the Atlantic. When it comes to pastoral theology, Muslim chaplains in UK-based research are often negotiating pastoral outcomes within the framework of the *shari'a*, a practice described as 'pastoral jurisprudence' (Ali and Gilliat-Ray 2012). This approach seems far less evident in the Muslim chaplaincy literature arising from the US context, but this contrast is not entirely surprising, given that a sizeable number of North American chaplains are converts to Islam and bring their biography into their pastoral practice (Ansari 2009; Harris 2022; Tuell 2011). Some of them have found Islam through Sufism and have gone through CPE training as already shown (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013 157). In contrast, many British Muslim chaplains are seminary graduates trained in the close reading of dense law manuals and the retention of juristic data, with little if any consideration of pastoral care or reflective practice.

The degree to which Muslim chaplaincy is modelled upon Christian chaplaincy – or is perceived to be so – has forced Muslim practitioners to consider how their work can be grounded in Muslim scriptures (Ansari 2022a; Ansari 2022b). This has been a necessary aspect of developing the field, if only to establish an acceptable and recognisable vocabulary and textual anchoring for this work. Although the institutionalisation of pastoral care did not exist historically in Muslim societies, there is overwhelming evidence for a pastoral care tradition in Islam. Ansari (2022a: 40) refers to the "subtle pastoral allusions" in the Qur'an, and takes what might be called a "Prophet-centric"

approach, using the life of the Prophet Muhammad as a role model for his chaplaincy work.

What emerges from the literature we explored is an ongoing internal debate about the degree to which the uniqueness of this new profession of "Muslim chaplaincy" is distinctive, particularly in relation to the inevitable influence that the Christian tradition has had in shaping this arena of religious work. Some might argue that Ansari is insufficiently critical in his use of vocabulary, and that phrases such as "prayerfulness for God's redemptive grace of eternal life over death" would resonate well in the Christian tradition (Ansari 2022b 73) and is insufficiently "Islamic". Others would see Ansari's approach as a creative elaboration of Muslim chaplaincy with a strong theological focus.

Alongside tensions about the distinctiveness of Muslim chaplaincy vis-à-vis Christian chaplaincy, there is a tension arising from an entirely different quarter about the extent to which concepts derived from the secular world of psychotherapy and counselling (such as "acceptance", "empathy") should become part of the vocabulary of chaplaincy (Haddara 2020). "Spiritual care givers who are lacking professional knowledge in the area of counselling may make faulty decisions as a result of misunderstanding the apparent symptoms" (ibid.: 11). Whilst Isgandorava (2013: 128) is adept at using terminologies from the world of professional counselling, she is adamant that Muslim chaplaincy must move away from Christian-centric terminology. But not everyone might agree with her adoption of vocabulary derived from counselling literature.

Isgandarova's approach anchors traditional Islamic practice in a framework of spiritual care linked with psychology and social sciences (Isgandarova 2011a; Isgandarova 2011b). For her, effective Islamic spiritual care (Isgandarova 2011a) comprises references to the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic scholars, but also psychology. It is "based on the concept that humans are a composite of integral physiological, psychological, mental, and spiritual components" (ibid.: 3). By using the term "spiritual care", Isgandarova places her approach in a wider interdisciplinary setting, while also advocating a faith-specific approach.

6 Muslim Chaplaincy and Gender

By now, there is a small but growing body of research and writing about the development of Muslim chaplaincy undertaken by women. Although the body of literature exploring the emergence of Muslim chaplaincy and gender may be small, it is of disproportionate importance for recording transformative understandings about religious leadership and gender in Islam more broadly, for both women *and* men. In describing the way in which women are entering

the field of professional chaplaincy, the figure of the imam as the only source of religious authority is being decentred (Jalalzai 2020). Those who are writing about female Muslim chaplaincy, and the practitioners who are the focus of their research, are in many ways pioneers, even though progress is developing at the microlevel, and remains "organic [and] subtle" (Yuskaev and Stark 2014 8).

In many ways, the experiences of female Muslim chaplains have similarities with the situation of "Muslim visiting ministers" in chaplaincy in the UK during the 1990s, when issues of funding, authority, training, precedent and power were often exclusionary forces (Beckford and Gilliat 1998). Many of the same themes recur in the material we identified for this article. However, for our purposes, understanding the development of female Muslim chaplaincy and the way it is reflected in academic and practitioner literature also needs to be appreciated in relation to the broader landscape of women in chaplaincy, the role of women in Islam, the position of Muslims in minority contexts, and questions of religious leadership and authority in Islam. All of these are important contextual factors that both enable and, more typically, often constrain the emergence of female Muslim chaplaincy.

We identified 10 key publications that relate to Muslim women's involvement in chaplaincy, three of which had the word "female" or "women" in their title (Ibrahim 2023; Isgandarova 2023; Jalalzai 2020). The recent dates of these 10 publications (none having been authored before 2011) is indicative of the relative marginalisation of Muslim women within institutional spiritual care thus far (Isgandarova 2023), both in practice and in research, although the chapter by Jalalzai (2020) rests upon a doctoral thesis from 2016, which included an entire chapter about gender (Jalalzai 2016). The authors bring both researcher and academic perspectives to the topic, with Isgandarova able to bring particularly strong academic research reflections to practitioner experience.

All the relevant texts were authored in the North American or Canadian context. This reflects significant differences in the demography of Muslim minority communities and the contexts from which female involvement in chaplaincy has developed, as well as differences in the opportunities available for Muslim women to train as chaplains. Some US chaplaincy training institutions have actively created programmes for the development of female Muslim chaplaincy in ways that are more difficult to identify in other parts of the world.

As chaplaincy largely occurs in mixed-gender institutions, literature that documents the potential impact of the mixed-gender training/classroom environment has been important for us to consider. "The program at the

Hartford Seminary stands out for its encouragement of women's participation" (Khoja-Moolji 2011 9). Research by Gilliat-Ray et al. notes the way that both men and women can be shaped by the opportunity to learn alongside those of the opposite gender (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013 65). Many male chaplains in the UK enter the profession after undertaking Islamic Studies in a traditional male-only seminary, so learning in a mixed-gender classroom environment without a curtain separating the two genders means recognising the equality of women's chaplaincy and becoming open to their perspectives. Likewise, female chaplaincy students begin to find their voice vis-à-vis male scholars.

The involvement of Muslim women in chaplaincy is a sphere of the profession that is most certainly growing as public institutions recognise the need for many Muslim service-users to have access to a female Muslim chaplain (Ibrahim 2023). There are pastoral situations that call for a male and female chaplain to work together to bring about satisfactory outcomes; the scenario of multiple family members distressed by a sudden death on a hospital ward being one example (Ali and Gilliat-Ray 2012). Institutional demand arising from service-user needs has been a significant driver of the development of female Muslim chaplaincy work.

One of the strongest themes emerging from the literature about female Muslim chaplaincy is the way in which this sphere of work has enabled women to take on professional religious roles and leadership on the one hand (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013; Laird and Abdul-Majid 2023), while also challenging prevalent assumptions about religious titles and the hegemony of male Muslim leadership, on the other. Although the person of the (male) "imam" is still often seen as the prototype for spiritual caregiver (Isgandarova and O'Connor 2012), chaplaincy gives women an opportunity to exercise religious authority outside of mosque or other community-based structures, thereby disrupting normative assumptions held both within Muslim organisations and within hiring institutions. Very often, this can mean unpacking the very title "chaplain", for which there is no direct equivalent in Arabic (Yuskaev and Stark 2014 61), and explaining that not all chaplains are imams, and not all imams are chaplains (ibid.). Muslim women are exploring aspects of their tradition in new ways and deriving empowerment from it. This in turn challenges assumptions held by others that women do not, or cannot, exercise professional leadership roles in Islam. There is a growing recognition that the role of chaplain and imam are distinctive and that, while women may not lead prayers in public institutions, they can nevertheless act as facilitators of it, thereby establishing "a place for religiously observant Muslims in secular institutions" (Yuskaev and Stark 2014 8).

Of particular note in the small but important body of literature that we identified, is the sense in which the development of female Muslim chaplaincy is beginning to be a catalyst for changing expectations about religious leadership in Muslim communities and institutions more broadly:

> the trend of women taking on professional leadership and spiritual care positions in non-Muslim institutions means that more women have the practical skills necessary to support U.S.-based Muslim community organisations too … mosques in the United States will likely realise the benefits of having a professional woman scholar and spiritual caregiver on staff. (Ibrahim 2023 102).

Jalalzai's (2020: 212) research echoes this point, noting the way that some are arguing "for the need of new forms of religious authority, such as chaplaincy, to diversify the types of leadership available to Muslim communities". The significance of female Muslim chaplaincy for Islam in the US (and other places where it is beginning to develop) is therefore disproportionate to the numbers of women involved, given the potential for reshaping the contours of religious leadership more broadly. However, this development is not at the expense of male leadership. Rather it is about the complementary skills that women can bring to their work with both male and female service-users. Jalalzai (ibid.: 218) records the way in which a female Muslim university chaplain performed her role in a way that could "decouple ritual leadership, intellectual scholarship, and pastoral caregiving", thereby posing no threat to the traditional ritual leadership exercised by imams.

Current research about female Muslim chaplaincy work appears to mirror the broader Chaplaincy Studies field, which is still typically concentrated on chaplaincy in hospitals and higher education (as opposed to other sectors). Our Excel spreadsheet included far more publications derived from research about the health and higher education sectors than, for example, from prisons or the military. Khoja-Moolji (2011:6) notes, "a number of factors make university campuses an ideal place for the emergence of Muslim women's leadership". We look forward to the publication, in due course, of research that explores the experiences of Muslim women working as chaplains in prisons, leisure facilities, ports, cultural associations and the many other spaces where chaplaincy is now practised (Sampson et al. 2024). Likewise, we anticipate future research that explores how female Muslim chaplains are negotiating their role vis-à-vis both chaplains of other faiths and their male colleagues both within and outside institutional contexts.

7 Conclusion

As Muslim communities have developed in Europe and North America, they have gradually been incorporated into the sphere of professional chaplaincy. The growing establishment of Muslim chaplaincy practice is now reflected in the availability of a substantial volume of publications and research. As an outcome of our research to map and evaluate this work, we are suggesting that the extent of material that now exists is indicative of an emergent sub-field of "Muslim Chaplaincy Studies", within the wider Chaplaincy Studies field.

Our analysis of publications to date suggests that the strength of Muslim chaplaincy as a sphere of practice and research appears to vary according to several factors. Perhaps the most significant considerations are church – state relations, and the pre-existing arrangements for institutional pastoral care. The legal-historical-political and religious environment that shapes the way in which local and national governments manage religious minorities in general, and Muslims in particular, will influence the extent to which institutional Muslim chaplaincy can develop and flourish. Quite simply, Muslim chaplains have had to learn how to work within already well-established religious infrastructures. Some of these pre-existing institutional arrangements have been more hospitable than others to the development of Muslim chaplaincy practice and research.

Alongside these context-specific considerations, the migration histories of Muslim communities in Europe and North America are very different. This has shaped the demography of these communities, and the extent to which their pastoral care needs within public institutions may need to be recognised. Migration histories also influence the background and qualifications of those Muslims who have been drawn into chaplaincy work. The outcome of these differences within Muslim communities is a variation in the degree to which Muslim chaplaincy practitioners can bring an analytical and/or academic approach to their practice. Our research has revealed that the quality and volume of outputs reflect variable research capacity among practitioners. At one end of the spectrum, some practitioners are highly adept producers of Islamic pastoral theology, thereby contributing to context-sensitive situational theological reflection. They are thus an important expression of religious authority and a valuable asset to their communities, where they are able to contribute to wider debates about the situation and needs of Muslims in minority contexts. As yet, however, the number of practitioners at this end of the spectrum remains relatively small.

While we suggest in this article that there is now a distinctive field of "Muslim Chaplaincy Studies", it seems highly desirable that this emergent

sphere of work should be "in conversation" with mainstream (interdisciplinary) Chaplaincy Studies research. The emerging strength and development of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies has much to contribute to Chaplaincy Studies overall. Similarly, there is a constructive conversation to be had between chaplaincy practitioners of different faiths as they explore together the implications of meeting the institutional pastoral care needs of populations shaped by growing religious diversity, including intra-faith diversity. However, these conversations will be stimulated by the development of research capacity, especially among chaplaincy practitioners who are interested in research methodologies and the potential for bringing advanced analytical insights to their work. Early indications suggest that Muslim women working in chaplaincy may have much to contribute to this effort, and that their work as chaplains may stimulate important new discussions about Islamic religious leadership in minority contexts, and the pastoral needs of Muslim communities more broadly.

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