

SHAHNAZ SAVANI, Ph.D, LMSW, MA

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Passionate and experienced educator, skilled researcher and mature social worker well versed in scientific knowledge on mental health issues, suicide prevention and intervention and evidenced based psychosocial interventions for mental illness in low and middle-income countries around the world.

PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS

- Mental Health awareness/education in low and middle-income countries
- Suicide prevention/intervention in the global south, particularly Central Asia
- Closing the treatment gap for mental health care in low-income countries
- Scaling up mental health services at the community level by training lay personnel to provide evidence-based psychosocial interventions

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work (2020) Dissertation: <i>A Renewed Commitment to Life: A Grounded Theory study of Suicide Attempts in Badakhshan, Tajikistan</i>	University of Houston, Houston, TX
Master of Social Work (2008)	University of Houston, Houston, TX
Master of Arts in Education (1993)	University of London, London, England
Master of Arts in Muslim Societies and Cultures (1992)	University of London, London, England
Bachelor of Arts in Ancient Indian Culture (1989)	University of Bombay, Mumbai, India

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2022 – present	Assistant Professor University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, TX
2019 – 2022	Assistant Director of Field Education University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, TX
2019 -- present	Adjunct Professor Tulane School of Social Work
2019 – present	Research Fellow , Center for Mental Health Research and Innovations in Treatment Engagement and Services University of Houston, Houston, TX
2016 – present	Lecturer of Social Work University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, TX

2012 – 2014

Adjunct Professor, Graduate College of Social Work
University of Houston, Houston, TX

COURSES TAUGHT

Bachelor level

SOCW 2361: Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare
SOCW 3362: Human Behavior in the Social Environment II
SOCW 3311: Urban Practice
SOCW 4202: Issues in Field Practicum I
SOCW 4204: Issues in Field Practicum II
SOCW 4332: Crisis Intervention
SOCW 4335: Study Abroad, India: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in India
SOCW 4390: Special Topics in Social Work, Understanding Suicide

Master level

SOCW 7304: Contextualized Strengths Based Practice in Social Work
SOCW 7325: Assessment in Social Work Practice
SOCW 7360: International Social Work: A Comparative Approach (India and U.S.): Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Intervention in India
Global Mental Health

Doctoral level

SOWK 9206: Research Ethics
SOWK 9210: Qualitative Research and Interpretive Analysis
SOCK 9450: Portfolio Planning Seminar

COURSES DEVELOPED

SOCW 4335: Study Abroad India: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in India
SOCW 4399: Global Mental Health (Online Format)
SOCW 4390: Special Topics in Social Work: Understanding Suicide (Online Format)
SOCW 7325: Assessment in Social Work Practice (Online Format)
SOCW 7367: Advanced Social Policy (Online Format)

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

12. Savani, S. (2023). A Renewed Commitment to Life: A Grounded Theory Study of Suicide Attempts in Badakhshan, Tajikistan. *Journal of Mental Health and Social Behavior* 5(2):183. <https://doi.org/10.33790/jmhsb1100183>
11. Brewer, K. B., Gearing, R. E., Cheung, M., Leung, P., Carr, L. C., **Savani, S.**, Ma, Y., Chen, W., & He, X. (2023). Formal versus informal pathways to mental health care in China. *China Journal of Social Work*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17525098.2023.2252913>
10. Gearing, R. E., Washburn, M., **Savani, S.**, Mytelka, C., Carr, L. C., Robinson, A., Clark, D., & Robbins, S. P. (2023). Strengthening social work skills and competency through exposure to diversity. *Journal of Social Work Education*. doi:10.1080/10437797.2023.2199049

9. Savani, S., Barros-Lane, L., Germany, A. (2023) Closing the Mental Health Treatment Gap Through Field Education: A Call to Action in *Field Scholar*, 13(1).
<https://fielddeducator.simmons.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-320-2.pdf>
8. Bonano-Broussard, D., Henry, A., Williams, N., Mitchell, D., **Savani, S.**, (2023). Social Work Field Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Scoping Review of the Literature in *Field Scholar*, 13(1): 1-21. <https://fielddeducator.simmons.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/22-310.pdf>
7. Diebold, K., Graham, C., Laventure, M., Williams, N., **Savani, S.**, (2023) Telehealth Suicide Assessment and the Emergency Order of Detention (EOD) Process: A Systematic Review in *The Journal of Mental Health and Social Behavior*, 5(1): 176.
<https://gexinonline.com/uploads/articles/article-jmhsb-176.pdf>
6. Savani, S., & Gearing, R. E. (2023). "I didn't do it!": Lived experiences of suicide attempts made without perceived intent or volition. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 60(6), 942–953.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13634615221126057>
5. Gearing, R. E., Washburn, M., Brewer, K. B., Kovach, J. V., Mandiberg, J. M., Borja, S., Barthelemy, J., **Savani, S.**, Smith, L., Robinson, A., & Gardner, J. (2022). Center for Mental Health Research and Innovations in Treatment Engagement and Service (MH-RITES Center) at the University of Houston. *Research on Social Work Practice*.
4. Savani, S., Webb, A., McCarty, D. (2020) Confronting Islamophobia through Social Work Education in *Islamophobia Studies Journal*
https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/islastudj.5.2.0134#metadata_info_tab_contents
3. Smith, D.S., Goins, A.M. & **Savani, S.** (2020). A Look in the Mirror: Unveiling Human Rights Issues Within Social Work Education. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-020-00157-7>
2. Savani, S. (2020) Suicide in Asia: A Literature Review in *Institute of Public Policy Working Paper Series*, University of Central Asia <https://ucentralasia.org/Resources/Item/2779/EN>
1. Savani, S., Gearing, R., Frantsuz, Y., Sozinova, M. (2020) Suicide in Central Asia in *Suicidology Online* 2020; 11(1), 1-12 <http://www.suicidology-online.com/pdf/SOL-2020-11-1-1-1.pdf>

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

1. "He will never get better!" Attitudes toward Treatment in Tajikistan
2. Suicide in Tajikistan: Relational Stigma
3. Mental Health Treatment Stigma in Tajikistan
4. Mental Health Relational Stigma in Tajikistan

5. Barriers and Facilitators to Seeking Treatment for Mental Illness in Tajikistan.

INVITED BOOK CHAPTERS

Gearing, R. E., Alonzo, D., **Savani, S.**, Burr, S., Arora, A., & Khudododova, S. (in press). Suicide and Religion: A Comparative Analysis of this Complex Relationship to Inform Practice. In A. Breivik, M. Schouler-Ocak & M. Khan (Ed.), *Suicide Across Cultures*. London: Oxford University Press.

Savani, S., Arora, A., Brown, M., Ma, Y., & Gearing, R. E. (in press). The Influence of Religion on Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide. In A. Breivik, M. Schouler-Ocak & M. Khan (Ed.), *Suicide Across Cultures*. London: Oxford University Press.

Savani, S. (2015) Reframing pastoral counseling: towards developing a model of pastoral care within Muslim communities in Maynard, E. and Snodgrass, J. (Ed.) *Understanding Pastoral Counseling*. Springer Publishing Company.

SELECTED PEER REVIEWED RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Savani, S. (2023) *The Influence of Religion on Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide* presented at the International Association of Suicide Prevention World Congress, Piran, Slovenia, September 2023.

Savani, S. (2023) *"I didn't do it!": Lived experiences of suicide attempts made without perceived intent or volition* presented at the International Association of Suicide Prevention World Congress, Piran, Slovenia, September 2023.

Brewer, K. B., **Savani, S.**, Cheung, M., Leung, P., Carr, L. C., Ma, Y., Chen, W., He, X., & Gearing, R. E. (April 2024). *Understanding pathways to mental health care in China: Findings from a community survey*. The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development (SWSD), Panama City, Republic of Panama.

Gearing, R. E., Washburn, M., **Savani, S.**, Mytelka, C., Carr, C., Robinson, A., Clark, D., & Robbins, S. (April 2024). *Strengthening Social Work Skills and Competency through Exposure to Diversity*. The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development (SWSD), Panama City, Republic of Panama.

Savani, S. (2021) *A Renewed Commitment to Life: A Grounded Theory Study of Suicide Attempts in Badakhshan*, Tajikistan presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Orlando, FL, November 2021.

Savani, S. (2018) *Suicide in Central Asia: Prevalence, Risk and Protective factors; A systematic Review* presented at the Global Alumni Reunion, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, United Kingdom, November 2018.

Savani, S. (2018) *Suicide in Central Asia: Prevalence, Risk and Protective factors in Muslim Countries*, presentation at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Orlando, FL, November 2018.

Savani, S. (2018) *Confronting Islamophobia through Social Work Education* presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Orlando, FL, November 2018.

Savani, S. (2018) *A Systematic Study of Prevalence, Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide in Central Asia: The Implicit Role of Culture* presented at the 2018 Asia Pacific Conference of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, New Zealand, May 2018.

Savani, S., & Gearing, R. E. (April 2018). *Investigating Suicide in Central Asia: Examining Cultural Risk and Protective Factors and Adapting Interventions*. The American Association of Suicidology Annual Conference, Washington, DC

Savani, S. (2018) *Conversations and Skill Practice in an Online Suicide Prevention and Intervention Course* presented at the Annual Conference of Social Work Distance Education, San Antonio, Texas.

Savani, S. (2018) *Suicide in Central Asia: Risk and Protective Factors and Interventions* presented as ePoster at the Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, Washington DC.

Savani, S. (2017) *The Role of Social Work Education in the Age of Islamophobia* presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Dallas, Texas.

Savani, S. (2017) *The Role of Social Work in the Age of Islamophobia* presented at the Annual NASW/Texas Conference, Galveston Island, Texas.

INVITED TALKS

Savani, S (December 2023) Media representation of Suicide, Madras Christian College, Department of Social Work.

Savani, S. (October 2021) Suicide in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, GITAM School of Gandhian Studies, Visakhapatnam, India. (Online format)

Savani, S. (July 2019) *Suicide in Central Asia: Prevalence, Risk and Protective factors: The Role of Culture*; University of Central Asia, School of Professional and Continuing Education, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Savani, S. (January 2019) *Gender based Violence and Suicide in Central Asia*: Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan.

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2023 **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health: Reliable Flexible Funding**
Principal Investigator, “Closing the Mental Health Treatment Gap” Award period: May 2024-May 2029. \$275,000 (Submitted)
- 2022-2023 **U.S. Department of State, Fulbright Commission
Fulbright Scholar Award, Tajikistan**
Principal Investigator, “Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Tajikistan: Building Awareness and Capacity” Award period: August 2021-December 2021. Stipend including travel, living, and research expenses to spend one semester in Tajikistan as a U.S. Fulbright Commission Research and Teaching Scholar
- 2020 – 2021 **U.S. Embassy of State New Delhi PAS. ND-NOFO-19-10**
Co-Investigator, “Exchange Programming with America and New Delhi for Mental Health (EXPAND-MH): Developing Sustainable U.S. - India Bilateral Mental Health Capacity and Linkages in Higher Education.” Award period: April 2020 to April 2021: \$50,000.00 (submitted).

UHD Awarded Grants

- 2022-2023 **Faculty Development Grant**
The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education and Development, Panama City, Panama, April 2024. \$1350.
- 2021-2022 **Faculty Development Grant**
32nd World Congress, International Association of Suicide Prevention, Piran, Slovenia, September 2023: \$3391.54
- 2017-2019 **College of Public Service, University of Houston-Downtown
OER Grant**
Curriculum Development for course conversion from textbook-based instruction to Open Educational Resources (OER), “Converting SOCW 3362: HBSE II and SOCW 4332: Crisis Intervention to OER.” Award period March 2017-March 2019: \$9500.
- 2019-2020 **Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, University of Houston-Downtown
Online Course Development Initiative (OCDI)**
Curriculum Development for course conversion to Online delivery, “SOCW 2361: Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare.” Award period: March 2019-May 2020: \$4000.
- 2018-2019 **College of Public Service, University of Houston-Downtown
Curriculum Innovation Award (CIA)**
Development, “Confronting Islamophobia through Social Work Education.” Award period: August 2018-August 2019: \$2569.27.

- 2018-2019 **College of Public Service, University of Houston-Downtown
Curriculum Innovation Award (CIA)**
Curriculum Development, “Study Abroad India: A Focus on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in India.” Award period: April 2018-December 2018: \$2470.92.
- 2018-2019 **College of Public Service, University of Houston-Downtown
Conference and Research Experience for Students (CARES) Award**
Support for research assistant travel, “Study Abroad India: A Focus on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in India.” Award period: June 2018-December 2018: \$2550.00
- 2018-2019 **College of Public Service, University of Houston-Downtown
Scholarly Innovation Award (SIA)**
Support for travel and presentations (international),” Suicide in Central Asia: Risk and Protective Factors” Award period: January 2018-December 2019: \$2368.00.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Teaching)

Growing with Canvas, UHD TTLC (2023)
Inclusive Teaching for Equitable Learning, (semester long) Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) (2021)
Certificate in Evidence-Based Instruction and Course Design, (6-hour training) UHD CTLE (2021)
Designing A Quality Course, (6-hour training) UHD CTLE (2021)
Promoting Academic Integrity, UHD CTLE (2020)
Meeting QM Standards: Creating a Syllabus Template, Quality Matters (2020)
How to Observe & Evaluate Faculty in The Online Classroom, Quality Matters (2020)
Blackboard Foundations, UHD CTLE (2021)
Implementing Open Educational Resources, Part I (week long), Online Learning Consortium (2019)
Implementing Open Educational Resources, Part II (week long), Online Learning Consortium (2019)
UHD Online Teaching Certificate Program (5-day training), UHD CTLE (2018)
Advanced Online Teaching Certificate Program, (semester-long, graduate course), Online Learning Consortium (2018)
Designing Exemplary Courses (2-day), UHD TTLC (2018)

SELECTED SERVICE

Committees

2021 CJ-SW Standards, Lecturer to Senior Lecturer
2019-2021 Online Education Taskforce, UHD
2020-2021 MSW Program Planning and Development, UHD
2019-2020 Peer-Reviewer, Online Course Development Initiative, CJ 3301: Criminology
2019 Search Committee, Assistant Professor of Social Work, UHD
2018 Search Committee, Director of Study Abroad, UHD

PhD/DSW Student Advising/Mentoring

2021-2022 A. Maya Kaye, Tulane School of Social Work
2021-2022 Rosemary Patterson, Tulane School of Social Work

2020-2021 Sangina Khudododova, Graduate College of Social Work, UH
2019-2020 Judy Fernandez/Valerie Alvarez, Tulane School of Social Work

Media Engagement

2020 Fox26 World Suicide Prevention Day
2020 Ismaili TV COVID-19 and Aging

SELECTED NON-ACADEMIC TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2012-2014 Lead Curriculum Developer and Trainer

Central Asia Mental Health Project, Badakhshan, Tajikistan

Created to facilitate the development of capacity in the community in Tajikistan, addressing mental health and underlying socio-cultural issues in a long-term, sustainable manner. Jointly funded by the Council for USA and the Aga Khan Foundation, USA.

- Assumed lead role in developing training modules for 100+ doctors, nurses, teachers and community health promoters on mental health/illness recognition and treatment, suicide education, prevention and intervention, crisis intervention, interpersonal violence, child and elder abuse and positive parenting.

2000 – 2014 Content Developer and Master Trainer

Social Safety Net, Aga Khan Council for USA, Houston, TX

Social service program providing services to the Ismaili Muslim Community in the United States, serving 1600 families annually across the US.

- Developed and delivered training programs for over 1400 staff and volunteer case managers on interpersonal violence, mental health/mental illness, child and elder suicide education, prevention and intervention, family harmony, crisis intervention, communication skills and case management.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Non-Academic)

2014 – 2016 Director of Social Services

Grace Care Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Houston, TX

- Provided a range of direct services to patients and families, identifying their psychosocial, mental and emotional needs to connect and develop access to services, fostering well-being, dignity and independence.
- Collaborated with a multi-disciplinary team of doctors, nurses, and occupational and physical therapists to ensure the highest level of physical, mental and psychosocial well-being and quality of life for patients.

2000 – 2014 Professional Service Provider

Aga Khan Council for USA, Houston, TX

- Managed a dynamic team of clinical social workers, case managers, educators and volunteers in 23 states across the US serving an average of 1600 families annually.
- Offered direct service to individuals and families with a wide range of issues (interpersonal violence, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse etc.), as well as engaged in curriculum development, staff education and training, and strategic planning and resource connection.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

International Association for Suicide Research (IASR)
International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)
American Association of Suicidology (AAS)
Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Statement of Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity

Born and raised in India, I have lived and worked in four countries around the world: India, England, Canada, and the US. First in my family to leave my home country, I began my career in social services and saw firsthand the numerous socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and environmental disparities that existed in our world. Through the lens of a brown, immigrant, Muslim woman, these disparities have been stark and close to home. I have dedicated my efforts toward advancing equity and pluralism in education, research, and scholarship. My lived experience as an immigrant and working in diverse settings has nurtured in me a deeply rooted commitment to embracing diversity and advancing social justice to improve the human condition.