

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series Editors: Richard J. Estes · M. Joseph Sirgy

el-Sayed el-Aswad

Countering Islamophobia in North America

A Quality-of-Life Approach




Springer

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series Editors

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Michigan, MI, USA

ISSN 2522-5367 ISSN 2522-5375 (electronic)
Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making
ISBN 978-3-030-84672-5 ISBN 978-3-030-84673-2 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84673-2>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

This book is dedicated to all those who have suffered from Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination, Muslims and non-Muslims.

When we turn a blind eye to discrimination against our Muslim neighbors, we cannot claim to remain true to our American values, and if we tolerate discrimination against those of another faith, we undermine our own cherished religious freedom.

President Jimmy Carter, Countering the Islamophobia Industry (2018, 4).

Preface

Lack of accurate information and knowledge about Islam and Muslims in North America and elsewhere poses problems hindering policymakers from designing and implementing effective policies countering Islamophobia regionally and globally. Islamophobia means unfounded hostility toward Islam as well as irrational fear of Muslims. The monograph is directed to a broad audience of academics, practitioners, and policymakers interested in the topic of Islamophobia and counter-Islamophobia. This study demonstrates how Islamophobia, hatred, discrimination, race, and racism intersect in North America. Terms such as Islamophobia, xenophobia, anti-Muslim racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, anti-Muslim hatred, anti-Muslim discrimination, and anti-Muslim prejudice are interchangeably used in this monograph as well as in public and private zones. Islamophobia shows a clear connection between the fear, distrust, hostility, and hate exhibited toward Muslims and Islam.

Islamophobia has been a pressing issue for academics, policymakers, and advocates of public and private sectors. The right of freedom of expression has been used as a justification for attacking Muslims in North America and other countries. The institutionalized apprehension or distrust of Muslims is both a drive and an outcome of Islamophobia. The phenomenon of Islamophobia derives from a complex set of ideological, racial, religious, social, economic, political, media, and other drivers. Islamophobia results in a negative impact on the well-being of Muslims living in North America (Fig. 1.1) Islamophobia prevents Muslims from contributing to social, economic, and political development of their North American communities. The trouble with the ideology of the anti-Muslim prejudice and fear of Muslims or Islamophobia is that the fight against politically oriented Muslim extremists is viewed as a “fight against Islam as a whole” (el-Aswad, el-S. 2013, p. 42).

This monograph focuses on the peoples of the USA and Canada who share all-encompassing social histories represented in their experience as former European colonies; the magnitude of their economies and natural resources; the large scope of their human capitals; and the diversity of their social, cultural,

religious, political, racial, and ethnic construction. The inhabitants of both countries travel easily across borders into one another's country (Estes et al., 2017). However, Muslims have been accused of not being able to assimilate into the mainstream life of North America.

This study provides a holistic understanding of Islamophobia, hate rhetoric, and racism in challenging socio-political climates in North America, particularly the USA and Canada, in which Muslims have experienced discrimination based on their religion, race, ethnicity, customs, language, names, and attire. This book introduces the reader to a quality-of-life perspective that identifies the drivers of Islamophobia from which counter-Islamophobic programs can be constructed. Special focus will be placed on the economic, political, cultural, religious, and media outcomes and drivers of Islamophobia. Additionally, this study addresses issues of minority versus majority as well as of aggressive policies and actions of the extreme right wing and other racist groups against Muslim minorities in North America. The Islamophobic discourse that employs a center/periphery binary focusing on *difference* and subordinate status of minorities has resulted in narratives of inequality, conflict, delegation, and resistance leading to illness and negative impact on Muslims' well-being.

This study examines the role media, the white supremacist movement, anti-immigrant policy, and right-wing or alt-right ideology play in the negative depiction of Islam and Muslims in North America. Muslims suffer from Western stereotypes depicting them as backward, misogynists, violent, terrorists, anti-modernity, and anti-democracy, showing no respect to adherents of other religions, particularly Jews and Christians (Firestone, 2010; Gingrich, 2005; Gottschalk, 2019).

This monograph discusses the negative impact of stereotypes on the overall well-being of Muslim communities in North America, being racially segregated, economically disadvantaged, and socially stigmatized and marginalized (Crewe, 2016). There is an adverse impact of institutional and collective racism on the well-being of Muslims among other ethnic groups. Furthermore, many actors involved in the Islamophobic campaigns have built extensive international networks, and have long been sharing organizational models, market strategies (supply and demand), tactics, and resources. The deep concern of North American countries about the place of Islam in the West goes beyond national frontiers, moving to global horizons.

This monograph provides evidence showing that North American Muslims have experienced a negative sentiment caused by a number of interrelated quality-of-life factors triggered by Islamophobia. These factors include religious drivers, as evidenced by increased Western vilification of Islamic beliefs and values; cultural drivers, as reflected in the perceived indifference of Western culture and Western prejudice against Muslims; economic drivers, as manifested by disparities in economic resources between Muslims and Western or non-Muslim communities; political factors, as mirrored in the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream civil and political affairs; and globalization and media factors, as represented by the manipulation of national and international media against Muslims.

In brief, Islamophobia results in a negative impact on the well-being of Muslims and non-Muslims living in North America and beyond. Islamophobia prevents Muslims from contributing to social, economic, and political development of their North American communities.

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Acknowledgment

A long history of conducting anthropological and sociological researches as well as serving tenure at universities in the USA, Egypt, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates have provided me with the opportunity to advance cross-cultural perspectives as evidenced in this monograph. I hope the reader finds reading this book as enlightening and enriching an experience as I have found this investigation into patterns of the Islamophobic industry impacting the quality of life and well-being of both Muslims and non-Muslims living in North America to be.

This book would not have come to fruition without the endorsement and inspiration of Richard J. Estes and M. Joseph Sirgy, editors of the Springer book series *Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making*. The comments and feedback of Richard J. Estes and M. Joseph Sirgy as well as of anonymous peer reviewers and scholars have enriched and deepened the scholarly discussion of this book.

I would like to thank my wife, Mariam, for providing editorial assistance. My son, Kareem, introduced me to a number of Muslim American/Canadian youths in both Dearborn, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario. My son, Amir, aided in fashioning three maps of North America, the USA, and Canada by using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. He, also, benefiting from meticulous editing training at Chicago Law School, provided editorial insights.

I am grateful to the editorial team at Springer International Publisher, with special thanks to Shinjini Chatterjee, Aurelia Heumader, Ameena Jaafar, and Ramya Prakash, for their administrative assistance of this work.

With appreciation,
el-Sayed el-Aswad

About the Book

The book contains eleven chapters divided into four parts: Part I—*the Background*—includes the first three chapters; Part II—*Outcomes of Islamophobia*—includes Chap. 4; Part III—*Drivers of Islamophobia*—contains three chapters; and Part IV—*Policies to Combat Islamophobia*—includes the last four chapters.

Part I: Background

Chapter 1, the *Introduction*, presents the main approach of the study. It introduces the reader to a quality-of-life approach that identifies the causes or drivers of Islamophobia from which counter-Islamophobic programs can be construed. The chapter will discuss the negative impact of stereotypes on the overall well-being of Muslim communities in North America. Special focus will be placed on the economic, political, cultural, religious, and media drivers of Islamophobia. There is a negative impact of institutional and collective racism on the well-being of Muslims (among other ethnic groups)

Chapter 2, *Research Methods*, discusses multiple sources used for obtaining data for this monograph. Macro and micro research methods are applied. In addition to reports of Islamophobia provided by specialized governmental agencies within the USA and Canada, data will be collected from international agencies such as the *United Nations*, the *World Bank*, the *Pew Research Center*, the *Gallup Poll* (Gallup Organization), the *Transparency International (Corruption Perceptions Index)*, and the *UNESCO Institute for Statistics* among other global data collection agencies. In addition, micro data are collected from informants belonging to two communities, Dearborn, Michigan, in the USA, and Windsor, Ontario, in Canada. The collected macro and micro data will be used for analytical and comparative purposes.

Chapter 3, *Brief History*, addresses the historical roots of Islam–Christian conflicts that go back to the middle ages and have continued into the present in the form of Islamophobia in the West, particularly North America. A brief description of the

economic and demographic features of Canada and the USA is provided. Further, this chapter addresses the rise and spread of Islamophobic organizations before and after the tragic events of 9/11.

Part II: Outcomes of Islamophobia

Chapter 4, *Outcomes of Islamophobia*, uses reliable output indicators to trace and document the impact of increased negative sentiment toward Muslims or Islamophobia on the deterioration of the quality of life and well-being of North American Muslims. These negative outcomes are reflected in major domains of living, including economic inequality, political exclusion, religious discrimination, and media exploitation.

Part III: Drivers of Islamophobia

Chapter 5, *Economic and Political Drivers of Islamophobia*, applies a quality-of-life perspective to analyze the economic and political drivers of far-right and extremist groups who have targeted immigrants and refugees in North America. This chapter addresses the impact of government policies, political parties, and political leaders on the dissemination of Islamophobia in Canada and the USA.

Chapter 6, *Religious and Cultural Drivers of Islamophobia*, employs a quality-of-life approach to investigate religious drivers, represented in extreme religiosity of some Christians, particularly white evangelicals, and cultural drivers, displayed in discrimination against Muslims and ignorance of Islam. Religious and cultural drivers of Islamophobia also include far-right groups, white supremacists, and other radical organizations, instigating broader patterns of racial, cultural, and social inequality in North America.

Chapter 7, *Media Drivers of Islamophobia*, examines negative and biased factors of the media that embolden and help spread Islamophobic stereotypes. This chapter focuses on three core media drivers of Islamophobia including far-right conservative ideologies, media bias, and mediated politicization of Islamophobia. Biased media outlets have contributed to the rise of Islamophobia by normalizing voices of racism, prejudice, and hatred, in the name of augmenting public discourses. The problem of biased media is that they deal with Muslims as if they were forming a monolithic and homogenous community, which is erroneous.

Part IV: Policies to Combat Islamophobia

Chapter 8, *Policies Confronting Biased Media*, assesses the effectiveness of policies that counter biased media known for having long-standing traditions of misrepresentations and prejudicial depictions of Muslims in North America. The challenge facing policymakers is to engage media outlets to eradicate Islamophobia either by imposing bylaws that restrict freedom of expression or by espousing a competitive marketplace of ideas, assuring freedom of expression as well as the dissemination of information from diverse and opposing sources.

Chapter 9, *Education Policy*, focuses on two core objectives. The first one addresses the negative impact of Islamophobia and discrimination on students' academic achievement and overall well-being in North America. The second sheds light on the educational policies implemented in the USA and Canada to reform their education systems and counteract Islamophobia in schools and beyond.

Chapter 10, *Human Rights Policy*, discusses human rights policies institutionalized and implemented by the governments of the USA and Canada as well as NGO agencies or advocacy organizations. It also addresses the United Nations and North American policy initiatives of human rights that support the implementation of laws and law enforcement to safeguard Muslims and other minorities against perpetrators. This chapter tackles ways and mechanisms used by Muslim organizations and individuals in countering Islamophobia.

Chapter 11, *Concluding Thoughts: Projected Policies of Counter-Islamophobia*, reviews the principal findings of the study and provides ideas for long-term policies and recommendations aimed at reducing or eliminating the rising tide of racism and Islamophobia. The objective here is to show to what extent understanding the drivers of ideologies and activities of Islamophobia help governments and policymakers generate sociocultural plans aimed at implementing a set of policies and interventions designed to effectively counter Islamophobia and enhance the well-being of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in North America.

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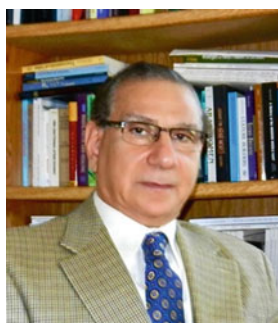
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About the Author



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He has been awarded fellowships from various institutes including the Fulbright Program, the Ford Foundation, the Egyptian government, and the United Arab Emirates University. He is a member of Editorial Advisory Boards of the Digest of Middle East Studies (DOMES), Muslims in Global Societies Series, Tabsir: Insight on Islam and the Middle East, and CyberOrient (Online Journal of the Middle). He is a member of the American Anthropological Association, the Middle Eastern Studies of North America, the American Academy of Religion, and the International Advisory Council of the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES). He has published nine books, over one hundred papers in peer-reviewed and indexed journals, and over forty book reviews.

List of Abbreviations

AMM	American Muslim Mission
AIC	Amnesty International Canada
ADC	Arab–American Anti-Discrimination Committee
AMSS	Association of Muslim Social Scientists in North America
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CAN	Canadian Anti-Hate Network
CMF	Canadian Muslim Forum
CMU	Canadian Muslim Union
CISNA	Council of Islamic Schools in North America
CAP	Center for American Progress
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CAIR	Council on American–Islamic Relations
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ISP	Index of Social Progress
IT	Information technology
ISPU	Institute for Social Policy and Understanding
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
ICD	Islamic Center of Detroit
ICI	Islamic Cultural Institute
ISSA	Islamic Social Services Association
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MAS	Muslim American Society
MAP	Muslims for American Progress
MPAC	Muslim Public Affairs Council
MSA	Muslim Students Association
NOI	Nation of Islam
NCCM	National Council of Canadian Muslims
NGO	Non-governmental organization

OCR	Office for Civil Rights (the U.S. Department of Education)
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Commission
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
QOL	Quality-of-life
PRRI	Public Religion Research Institute
SCMS	Sister Clara Muhammad Schools
SPI	Social Progress Index
SPLC	Southern Poverty Law Center
START	Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
TI	Transparency International
UMA	United Muslims of America
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WCAI	Worldwide Coalition against Islam
WCIW	World Community of Al-Islam