Developing the Conceptual Framework for Islamophobia: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Islamophobia is a form of bias, discrimination, and hatred towards Islam and its adherents that is frequently based on stereotypes and misunderstandings. Studies of Islamophobia is an interdisciplinary subject of academic research and analysis that focuses on the examination and understanding of this phenomenon. This area of research aims to investigate the numerous facets of Islamophobia, such as its historical causes, cultural effects, sociopolitical settings, and psychological underpinnings. In addition to giving techniques and answers for addressing and combating this form of discrimination, it seeks to shed light on the origins, effects, and implications of Islamophobia in many societies and circumstances. This paper aims to delve into the historical roots of islamophobia, and different perspectives on Islamophobia and reviews the major working frameworks of islamophobia studies with a special focus on Salman Sayyid's model. This paper provides a historical background to the problem and islamophobia and examines the related concepts and themes analytically. It also engages with the analysis of the attempts to explain the phenomenon of islamophobia thematically and investigates its social expressions in their definitive perspectives.

Keywords: *Islamophobia, discrimination, Salman Sayyid, Conceptual Framework for Islamophobia, misunderstandings*

Introduction

The first significant work on Islamophobia is credited to the British Runnymede Trust report "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" which was published in 1997. The report notes the anecdotal proof that being visibly identifiable as Muslim increases the risk of experiencing racist violence and claims that Islamophobia carries a high social cost for both Muslims and

the wider community. The report's release time was not a coincidence. Growing hostilities between Muslims and non-Muslims in the West and between the West and areas with a Muslim majority fueled the circumstances that led to the report. For instance, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian Revolution of 1979 both influenced Western opinions of Muslims and Islam negatively. The Rushdie Affair of 1988–1989 exposed tensions between Muslims and non–Muslims in Britain on the home front. Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian author, published his book The Satanic Verses in 1988, which is referred to as the "Rushdie Affair." Because of how it portrayed Islam, it caused a great deal of controversy among certain Muslims in Britain and overseas (Green, 2019).

The Runnymede report defines Islamophobia as a "dread or hatred of Islam and, consequently, to the fear and dislike of all Muslims," noting that the term also refers to the practice of discriminating against Muslims by keeping them out of the country's social, economic, and political life. The report identified eight perceptions related to Islamophobia. These perceptions not only give Islamophobia definitional form and substance while it was being discussed in the late 20th century, but they also rather effectively span the scope of current thought about Islamophobia. First, Islam is viewed as a single, immutable entity that is resistant to change and intellectually rigid. Second, it is viewed as being quite 'other' and culturally and spiritually distinct. It does not share any values with other cultures, especially western ones, and neither does it have any negative or beneficial effects on them. Third, Islam is thought to be fundamentally inferior to Western culture. It is considered to be sexist, primitive, illogical, and barbarous. Fourth, it is viewed as being unrelentingly violent, confrontational, threatening, supportive of terrorism, and engaged in a conflict of civilizations. Fifth, it is believed that Islam fundamentally represents a foreign political ideology, where the religious component is only employed as a tool of control or to obtain political or military benefit. Sixth, any complaints of 'the West' expressed by Muslims are immediately dismissed. Seventh, the idea that there would always be animosity against Islam is used to excuse prejudice towards Muslims and their exclusion from mainstream culture. Muslims inherently draw societal criticism since they are not "one of us." Thus, according to the report, Anti-Muslim hatred is seen as a natural and normal phenomenon, which, is the eighth factor of Islamophobia (Pratt & Woodlock, 2016)

The concept was further expounded upon by notable academics such as Allen (2010), Sayyid and Vakil (2010), Carr (2016), and numerous more experts. The authors, Itaoui and Elsheikh (2018), have endeavoured to elucidate this phenomenon by contextualising Islamophobia within its historical framework and by exploring many academic fields, including racialization, Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism, and others. The origins of Islamophobia can be historically linked to the phenomenon of Orientalism. According to Beydoun (2020), the theoretical foundation for the present study on Islamophobia can be attributed to Edward Said's seminal work, Orientalism. The thesis of Orientalism posits that the Western perspective gradually developed a perception of its own people, institutions, and civilizations as being superior to those of the Muslim world. This significant discourse facilitates our understanding of the emergence and expression of Islamophobia within the contemporary context of the War on Terror, both in the United States and other regions. Moreover, while the recent coinage of the term "Islamophobia," the contemporary phenomenon is deeply rooted in enduring political beliefs and pervasive misconceptions that conflate Islam with acts of terrorism. Islamophobia can be understood as a manifestation of Orientalism, in succinct terms. Hafez (2018) provides a comprehensive examination of the

theoretical discourse within the field of Islamophobia Studies, whereby he identifies three prominent ideological frameworks that employ the term.

1. **Prejudice studies:** It shows that Islamophobia mostly targets Muslims. Islamophobia in this instance is only a historical reincarnation of the horrible discrimination that Jews, Afro-Americans, and other groups have had to deal with. The factors of dominance and power are important because they help us comprehend how Islamophobia targets Muslim populations through a process of homogeneity. Muslims, particularly Western Muslims, are accused of being the "enemy within" and are suspected of doing so.

2. **Racism and postcolonial studies**: The dominant culture, primarily in Western cultures, is the subject of Islamophobia. Here, Islamophobia is largely seen in the context of an imbalance of power and establishes theoretical ties to postcolonial and critical racial studies. These studies' primary objective is to critique the power systems that try to rule the subjects they have created. Instead of concentrating on individual racism, they emphasise awareness of the racist practises embedded in our socialization and knowledge.

3. **Studies on decoloniality**: Islamophobia aims to relegate the "Muslim subject" to a voiceless underclass that must be subjugated. A post-positivist, post-orientalist, and decolonial perspective is introduced as a result of the epistemological struggle to overcome the violent hierarchy and dominance of the West over the non-West in this fight against Islamophobia, which is now a part of a larger global struggle against racialized inequalities and exploitation.

Different Perspectives on Islamophobia: An overview

There exists much debate over the precise definition of "Islamophobia." Islamophobia has been subject to varying definitions by scholars; however, it is commonly employed to denote the manifestation of animosity towards Muslims and the Islamic faith. According to Allen (2010), there are some who refuse to acknowledge any phenomenon that particularly singles out Muslims based on their religious affiliation. Conversely, there are those who employ the term "Muslims" in a broad sense to encompass all manifestations of animosity directed towards the religion and its followers. This approach simplifies Islamophobia as a phenomenon that is excessively simplistic and unnecessary, characterised more by the characteristics of the targets rather than the motivations and intentions of the individuals responsible.

According to Mastnak (2010), Christian fear of cultural assimilation for people living under Muslim authority is what led to the birth of anti-Muslim prejudice in the Christian world in the middle of the ninth century. Muslims were only one political challenge among many in Western Christendom. Pope Urban's Crusade, which began in 1095, was the catalyst for the rise of Islam as the "normative, fundamental, quintessential, universal enemy." However, modern-day Islamophobia is more than just a resurgence of historic Crusader hostility (Lopez,2011). The ideal position against which Muslims and their religion are negatively positioned is that of the White subject of the 'West', which is more of a conceptual than a strictly geographical entity, based on a (sometimes appropriated) mélange of ancient Greek, Roman, and Christian philosophical, legal, and religious ideas; Germanic customs; Latin-based Western Christianity; the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment; the American and French revolutions; and European Colonialism (Aroney and Ahdar, 2012).

The iconic perceptions of Muslims are mostly the result of racial categories that label them as intrinsically inferior, foreign, or "other," claim Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008). Muslims, who were once thought to be Arabs, Turks, or Asians, are still portrayed in Western mythology as being foreign, aggressive, hypocritical, zealous, hostile, rigid, filthy, dishonest, backstabbing, deceptive, mediaeval, past-obsessed, tyrannical, passive, and finally wicked. The west particularly the US started to perceive Muslims as threatened other.

Following the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 (often referred to as 9/11) in the US, Islamophobic hate crimes have considerably grown across the West. Since 9/11, there has been a rise in distrust of and downright animosity towards Muslims in the West, as various critics have demonstrated in detail (Zempi & Awan, 2019). According to Sheehi (2010), there has been a deliberate effort to demonise Islam and Muslims in order to "form a political culture that not only formulates, then justifies, United States foreign and economic policies, but also produces campaigns to ensure these policies are easily integrated into the American mainstream in order to solicit its support." Sheehi continues by outlining the strategies used in this campaign, which include the creation of fictitious academic forums, think tanks, institutes, and organisations that conduct activist "weeks," conferences, and seminars focused on favoured anti-Islamic themes. To "mainstream" their beliefs and gauge the degree to which they have gained traction in society, the organisers invite politicians and other notable figures to the events. Another tactic is to undermine and disparage reputable academics who either defend Israel, advocate for Palestinian rights, or teach views that challenge fanatical beliefs about Islam, Muslims, Arabs, the Middle East, etc. Even more drastic measures are also employed by law enforcement, such as employing informants who assist weak individuals in "self-radicalizing." Sheehi asserts that the promotion of an Islamophobic culture leads to war, torture, kidnappings, incarcerations, executions, surveillance, entrapment, and the limitation of civil liberties, in addition to harassment, discrimination, hate speech, and criminal violence against Muslims and those unlucky enough to be mistaken for Muslims.

Islamophobia, in the opinion of Zafar Iqbal (2019), is essentially a media fabrication with origins that can be traced back as far as the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s. However, the 9/11 tragedy heightened and consolidated anti-Muslim prejudice. With this, Islam also gained notoriety as an ideology and religion that posed significant threats to the security and peace of the West. There aren't many academic publications that examine the antagonistic relationships between Islam and other religions between the First World War and 9/11. It was possibly the reason why the Runnymede report on Islamophobia (1997), one of the most widely read literary works in the field of Islamophobia studies, was unable to trace the term's origins back to before 1991. He further states, since Islam's inception in the early 7th century in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, which sent a shock wave, primarily to Judaism and Christianity and other religious ideologies, it has been subjected to systematic denigration, including the religion itself, its Prophet (PBUH), and the message of God (the Quran). Due to its metastasizing development, Islam presented significant threats to the survival and viability of the world's most prevalent religions. For a variety of causes, a huge number of adherents of other religions converted to Islam. When examining Islam and other global faiths historically, it is certain that Islam has had antagonistic relationships with other world religions since its foundation.

He continues by saying that opponents' characteristics continued to change for religious and geopolitical reasons. People first dreaded being hated by Islam as it spread, and eventually that anxiety developed into terror. Being perceived as a rival to Christianity and

Judaism, other religions turned against it. In an effort to discourage others from adapting to Islam, the opposition began to criticise the religion, its prophet, and its adherents as Islam gained popularity. This eventually resulted in prejudice against Islam and Muslims in general. Furthermore, Muslims have evolved into a detestable race that harbours an unquenchable hatred for other people. These days, it takes many forms, including the perception of Islam as a threat to global peace, an orientalist "other," terror, excessive fear, and radically different political, social, and theological beliefs. Thus, a collection of phobias known as Islamophobia is created when the phenomena of terror, orientalists, prejudice, racism, othering, hatred, fear, and ideologies that contradict those of the West come together.

According to Lee et al. (2009, p. 23), fear "activates escape and avoidance motivated behaviour" and "vigilance to stimuli associated with impending danger." For this reason, Islamophobia can be regarded as a specific kind of unfavourable prejudicial response towards Islam and Muslims, which can produce discrimination, denigration, and violence. For instance, when Muslims are singled out by laws intended to control Islam's exposure in public, restrict Muslims' access to institutions of society, and prevent Muslim population increase. Therefore, he defines Islamophobia as "fear of Muslims and Islamic faith". (Abbas 2004, p. 28) describes it similarly as "the fear or dread of Islam or Muslims." Najid in his work Spatialized Islamophobia (Najid, 2021, p.11) defines it as "systemic racism against Muslims and the lived experience of discrimination against people who are perceived as Muslim. It is commonly understood as a process of racialization and Othering that essentializes and homogenizes a group of highly diverse individuals under a single religious attribute". He further states that Islamophobia is not just a human rights issue. It is not all about hatred towards Islam, but it also targets the visible markers of Muslim identity as well. Deepak Kumar in his book titled Islamophobia and the politics of empire: twenty years after 9/11 (2021) says that Islamophobia as a global threat existed before 9/11 and the succeeding War on Terror. Despite the hegemon's major role in supporting Islamophobia's global spread and entrenchment over the previous two decades, the book raises the alarm that the phenomenon is not exclusively American.

Islamophobia is defined by Zquete (2008, p. 323) as "a widespread mindset and fear-laden discourse in which people make blanket judgements of Islam as the enemy, as the 'other,' as a dangerous and unchanged, monolithic bloc that is the natural subject of well-deserved hostility from Westerners." Islamophobia, according to Stolz (2005, p. 548), is the rejection of Islam, Muslim communities, and Muslim people based on prejudice and stereotypes. It may include components that are action-oriented (such as prejudice and violence) as well as emotional, cognitive, and evaluative. In a study titled "Defining and Researching Islamophobia" Bleich has done extensive research on defining and measuring Islamophobia. He concludes that in the social sciences, the idea of islamophobia is still relatively new. However, there is no generally acknowledged meaning of the phrase. Therefore, it is very challenging to compare levels of Islamophobia to levels of other categories like racism, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia across time, space, or social groups. Islamophobia has developed over time from a primary political notion to one that is increasingly used for analytical purposes. The term Islamophobia is used by researchers to identify the history, presence, dimensions, intensity, causes, and consequences of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments.

According to Christopher Allen "Islamophobia is an ideology, similar in theory, function and purpose to racism and other similar phenomena, that sustains and perpetuates

negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam in the contemporary setting in similar ways to that which it has historically, although not necessarily as a continuum, subsequently pertaining, influencing and impacting upon social action, interaction, response and so on, shaping and determining understanding, perceptions and attitudes in the social consensus – the shared languages and conceptual maps – that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other. Neither restricted to explicit nor direct relationships of power and domination but instead, and possibly even more importantly, in the less explicit and everyday relationships of power that we contemporarily encounter, identified both in that which is real and that which is clearly not, both of which can be extremely difficult to differentiate between. As a consequence of this, exclusionary practices – practices that disadvantage, prejudice or discriminate against Muslims and Islam in social, economic and political spheres ensue, including the subjection to violence – are in evidence. For such to be Islamophobia however, an acknowledged 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' element – either explicit or implicit, overtly expressed or covertly hidden, or merely even nuanced through meanings that are 'theological', 'social', 'cultural', 'racial' and so on, that at times never even necessarily name or identify 'Muslims' or 'Islam' – must be present." (Christopher Allen p.190)

Conceptual framework for Islamophobic studies: Contribution of Salman sayyid

Salman Sayyid provides insight on the notion of Islamophobia in his essay "A measure of Islamophobia" in which he uses the idea of a language game as a referential framework to define and quantify Islamophobia. He asserts that there are three ways to oppose the idea of Islamophobia. There are many who believe that Islamophobia is not a legitimate category because there is no direct discrimination against Muslims. Any problems they encounter may be attributed to racism, thus there is no need for a distinct term to define them. The second is that Islamophobia is viewed as "political correctness gone mad" or another way of stifling the right of free speech. The third layer of Islamophobia is the belief that there are a sizable number of radicalised Muslims pose a real threat. Sayyid is of the opinion that a phrase acquires its meaning as a result of its usage and cultural origins. According to him, we need to identify the key issues that Islamophobia elicits in order to gauge its severity. The word Islamophobia is used, according to those who embrace it, to describe a scenario that might otherwise go unnoticed. As a result, the phrase is treasured as a way to offer a method for the elimination of injustices done to Muslims and is not about hatred and fear of Muslims or Islam. Thus, Islamophobia is a reaction to the problematization of Muslim identity and the weakening of Muslims' capacity to project themselves as Muslims in the future.

Salman Sayyid contends that in order to understand Islamophobia, one must go beyond its ostensible components and instead consider the breadth of its manifestations. Islam may be practised in different ways depending on certain social, cultural, and historical aspects that have an impact on how Islamophobia is used to characterise a situation. According to Sayyid, Islam is performed in four different theatres. The first is Muslimistan, where a sizable portion of the population identifies as Muslim and where the Islamicate dominates both socially and culturally. Even though their existence predates the establishment of the state, the second theatre is where Muslims are clearly the minority and marginalised in the national narrative. Third place where Muslims are primarily seen as immigrants. The fourth theatre is the one where there are hardly any Muslims present and Islamophobia is mostly expressed via indirect or virtual means.

The meaning of Islamophobia, he continues, cannot be comprehended by looking at its component pieces, but rather by considering the variety of applications it may serve. According to him, the goal of developing the repertory of Islamophobia is to clarify the types of acts that may be comprehended by using the category. He separated these actions into six major groups, as follows:

I. Attacks committed by haphazard individuals, loosely constituted groups, or formal organisations. Pushing, spitting, abusive language, tearing off the headscarf, beating, and murder are all part of it.

II. Attacks against Muslim-related properties

III. Islamophobia committed by intimidation. These activities are planned and involve several people working together to frighten a group of people who are thought to be Muslim or Muslim-friendly. The burning of the Quran, marches through Muslim neighbourhoods, and protests against mosques and cultural institutions are all part of this movement.

IV. The fourth cluster takes place in institutional contexts when people who are considered as Muslims are treated less favourably than others. It includes offensive remarks, task distribution, and unjust treatment of Muslims in the evaluation of work. It also involves harassment and bullying.

V. The fifth relates to instances where public statements that denigrate Muslims or Islam are made repeatedly and deliberately. When the Quran is published with Muhammad credited as the author, for instance, it is implied that a specific act of violence is prompted by Islam.

VI. Individuals or organisations can carry out the aforementioned five clusters. States are not directly engaged in sustaining these instances, but they may support them by ignoring them or by not providing any measures to resist such activities. The State actively participates in the sixth cluster of Islamophobia. This includes Muslim surveillance, Islamophobia in the criminal justice system, and state police restrictions on Muslim expression, such as dress code rules. These behaviours are anti-Islamic because they impose additional burdens on particular social groups, the majority of whom are Muslims.

According to Salman sayyid the rise of Islamophobia indicates two important trends. First, it suggests a post-racial subject who is prone to discriminatory practises. Second, the rise of Islamophobia indicates a change in the tensions and power dynamics brought on by the de-centring of the West. By labelling anything as Islamophobia, we are made aware of the racial issues that still exist in the post-racial world. We are reminded of the post in the post-racial by much of the reaction to the spread of Islamophobia.

Conclusion:

Islamophobia has received a lot of attention in academics, politics, and the general public as a complex and ubiquitous form of bigotry. But the lack of a coherent and thorough framework makes it difficult to build a better comprehension of this complicated problem. By providing a review of fresh conceptual framework that incorporates many aspects of Islamophobia, including as its historical origins, different perspectives, cultural manifestations, socio-political circumstances, and psychological mechanisms, this paper aims to brings to fore the discussion regarding the need for framework development in

Islamophobia studies. The framework discussed seeks to offer a thorough and nuanced perspective on the phenomenon by drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives in sociology, psychology, political science, religious studies, and cultural studies.

The study looked at the sociopolitical ramifications, cultural aspects, and impacts of Islamophobia on law, international relations, and public policy. It also examined the historical roots of Islamophobia and the ways in which historical developments have shaped its contemporary manifestations. The paper focused on the Salman Sayyid paradigm, which mainly addresses islamophobia in relation to Muslim identity assertion and the capacity to articulate it. In the end, the study looked at six different contexts where anti-Islamic sentiment is expressed and shown, from individual acts through media outlets, organisations, governments, social policies, and solitary activities.

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