The tendency of Islamophobia and Comportment of the World: Analytical Study

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Abstract

Islamophobia denotes discriminatory tendency and racism against Islam perceivers. A pol-religion originated concept is not just a phenomenon but is growingly deployed for a new zone of the research study in social sciences. It also raised controversy on its reference to religion. Western philosophy of equal rights and a safe area for minorities is under question. The article describes the frequent incidents of Islamophobia. It highlights the causes and impacts of Islamophobia on global society. This research paper will also explore the role of Pakistan in this crucial tendency. This paper will assist in further research and study this field deeply. It will present the points countering such discriminatory behavior.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Anti-Muslim, Discrimination, Islam, West

Introduction

Islamophobia is a term that has been employed in various public and scholarly forums. The word itself originated in the 1990s when several activists, commentators, and international organizations started to bring attention to destructive magniloquence and activities targeted directly at Islam, especially in Western societies.[1] Islamophobia can be broadly described as a hyperbolic dread, revulsion, and resentment towards Islam disseminated by destructive stereotypes resulting in prejudice, partiality and ostracism, and marginalization of Muslims from communal and political circles.[2]

As can be seen in publications of Western influencers in the late 1970s and 1980s, the association of negative stereotypes and sentiments with Islam has

been going on for a very long time.[3] However, the actual use of the term "Islamophobia" emerged in 1997 when a British NGO, the Runnymede Trust, published a report titled "Islamophobia: A challenge for us all.[4] The Runnymede Trust report used the term "Islamophobia" to describe the revulsion and resentment towards Islam and Muslims the consequences of such unfair and unfounded discrimination against Muslims.[5]

Causes of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is not a new concept. It dates back to the 18th and 19th Centuries. Orientalism can be identified as one of the earliest causes of Islamophobia. Orientalism is a comparison between the "Orient (the East) with that of the Occident (the West).[6] In this approach, the difference between Arabs and Western cultures is analyzed so that it is accentuated, amplified, and distorted such that Arabs (and consequently Muslims) are viewed as bizarre, regressive, uncivilized, and sometimes dangerous. Orientalism is evident in the works of early western artists and scholars. This situation constructed the East as highly radical, primitive, violent, and inferior to the West. These steps shaped the image of Muslims, which eventually reconstructed itself and resurfaced as Islamophobia.

Racialization is another historical factor that resulted in the advent of Islamophobia. It started in the 19th and early 20th century when European artwork specifically targeted the Arab and black population due to the differences in their physical appearances, culture, and clothing. The Africans and Arabs were usually depicted as inferior to the more modern and civilized European population. Due to the media's rapid progression, portrayals of certain stereotypes resulted in prejudice against that particular racial group. This pre-embedded racialization in the minds of the European population gave way to Islamophobia in the late 20th century.

Xenophobia is another of these causes which later resulted in Islamophobia. Xenophobia is merely a manifestation of racialization. This term is used to describe the "phobia" or fear of something foreign or peculiar. Arabs and Asians, in general, and Muslims in particular, have constantly been subjected to xenophobia by Western societies. They are perceived as barbarians who

can destroy the peace and do not deserve any rights or privileges given to the citizens of a country.

The fuel on the already simmering fire was the September 11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, which resulted in an impetus of Islamophobia. The Majority of non-Muslim communities, specifically the West, started perceiving Islam as a conservative, cruel, brutal, and chauvinistic religion. The Western media, being a significant influence on the rest of the world, spread animosity by conjecturing Muslims as the agents of violence and discontent in society. The Muslim community was ridiculed and subjected to racial and ethnic discrimination. As the general public began to experience Islamophobia, the political parties in the West exploited this fear and unrest for their political gains. Public commentators and political players further fueled the fire by defaming Islam. Throughout this chaos, the Western media intentionally downplayed the concerns of the Muslim community and daubed Islam as a religion of fundamentalism, discrimination, and reversion.[7]

Jihad, in Islam, is a good struggle, which a believer has to go through to stay on the right path. Western communities, however, perceive Jihad as a "holy war", which gives a terrifying impression of the phenomenon. Islamophobes claim to use this highly misrepresented notion of Jihad to further degrade and vitiate Islam. Furthermore, the misinterpretation of selected verses from the Quran and Ahadith also contributes to the distortion of the West"s understanding of Islam as a religion. All of this results in the spread of Islamophobia.[8]

Impacts of Islamophobia

The detestable orotundity for Muslims encourages the general public to be blatantly or covertly biased towards them.[9] As a result, Innocent, law-abiding Muslims are targeted and subjected to hostilities and prejudices based on the misconception of Islam as a religion. Statistics indicate a 200 percent increase in the rise of Islamophobic incidents at certain places in Europe.

The perpetrators of Islamophobia range from Individual to Institutional. Non-Muslim individuals are influenced by hate speeches of prejudiced politicians calling for the exclusion of Muslims and the portrayal of post-

Cold War scenarios in which Islam is depicted as the enemy that substituted Communism.[10]

There are various examples of Institutional Islamophobia in which such government policies and laws are formulated which go against the Muslims and Islam.

France:

Muslims comprise 6.5 to 8% of the total population of France.[11] However, France has adopted extreme secularism in its laws and policies. For example, the prohibition against displaying any religious symbols and targeting and banning the headscarves of Muslim women was an extremely Islamophobic initiative by the French government. This initiative depicted France as remarkably incapable of celebrating multiculturalism and acknowledging its Muslim citizens as a contributing factor in the welfare of society. This step also goes against the French ethos of liberty, fraternity and, equality.[12]

The attack on Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris in 2015, which the ISIS group later claimed, also fueled Islamophobia. Consequently, in 2015, a local mayor in France declared that school cafeterias in his district would no longer cater to the needs of Muslim students and would stop providing non-pork alternatives. Although the Islamic faith forbids pork consumption, this proclamation deeply affected the sizeable Muslim community in the district because packed lunches were also forbidden in the schools. When Muslims requested the court to take action against this injustice towards their children, the court refused to acknowledge this and completely disregarded the Muslims' dietary restrictions.[13]

The unjust hatred and prejudice against Islam and Muslims are becoming very common in France. Unfortunately, instead of curbing this hate and violence, French authorities blame the Islamic faith and practice for this. A recent example of this behavior was seen when French President Emmanuel Macron defended the blasphemous content produced by the Charlie Hebdo magazine and made anti-Islam statements. His statements hurt the sentiments of French Muslims and Muslims worldwide.[14]

United Kingdom:

The Muslim community in the United Kingdom comprises about 5% of the total population, half of which are native people.[15] While Britain has a long history of multiculturalism, a survey conducted in 2011 by Pew Research Center found that about 75% of the UK population perceived Islam as the most violent religion.[16]

This Islamophobia has led to Muslims being discriminated against in the workplaces as well as schools and colleges. A survey conducted in 2014 found that British Muslim men had 76% fewer opportunities for employment than British Christians of the same age and qualification. Furthermore, despite holding more capabilities than the British Christians, it was observed that British Muslims had only 50% chances of maintaining a higher directorial or executive post.[17] The most common attacks of Islamophobes are on school-going children as well as women and girls wearing *Hijab*. There have been many incidents when students were attacked and harmed in the vicinity of the school. Reports show that such incidents increase in frequency after a triggering event like Manchester Bombing.[18]

A report published by the University of Exeter in 2010 stated that the number of hate crimes against Muslims has increased. These crimes range from low-level assaults to death threats to murder.[19] Along with these incidents, some anti-Islam organizations have also cropped up in the last decade, such as English Defence League, Scottish Defence League, and British National Party. The influence of these organizations, however, remains limited.

Germany:

Concerning the number of immigrants, Germany is second only to the United States. Germany"s Chancellor Angela Merkel has been criticized quite heavily for her favorable policies for immigrants, especially in the Syrian refugee crisis.[20] Muslims comprise about 4-5% of the total population of Germany.[21] After France, Germany has the most prominent European Muslim population. In 2015, about 1 million Muslim refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan immigrated to Germany. This sudden influx has been met with

hostility and distrust by the native population, consequently increasing Islamophobia.

An anti-immigration party was founded in 2013, named "Alternative for Germany" (AfD). The party stresses that there is a vast incompatibility between the Islamic faith and German culture. Thus the influx of Muslim immigrants shall be stopped, and those already living in Germany shall be extradited.[22] The Majority of Germans believe that Muslims are not a good influence in their society. A survey held in 2016 indicated that roughly 40% of Germans agreed with banning the immigration of Muslims in the country, and approximately 60% held that Islam has no place in the country.[23]

Furthermore, the Muslim minority residing in Germany often face bigotry and racism due to the negative concept that Islam and European values are incompatible.

These are just a few examples of Islamophobia's impact on Muslim minorities living in Western countries. Unfortunately, the same attitude is faced by Muslims in other European and Western countries as well.

Islamophobia in Pakistan:

Contrary to the general belief, Islamophobia has not just affected the Muslim minorities living in Non-Muslim countries; it has also taken its root in Muslim majority countries like Pakistan. The influence of religious extremist and conservative groups like the Taliban and ISIS and their inflexible and obstinate interpretation of the Quran have caused Islamophobia in Pakistan. The West has always labeled Muslims as the culprits, whereas Muslims are the real victims. As a result, Pakistanis live in constant fear of these so-called religious groups.

Pakistan is one of the worse affected countries in terms of terrorism. This is because Al-Qaeda and the Taliban see everyone who does not follow their version of Islam as perpetrators. Consequently, terrorist attacks have become very common at markets, mosques, public places, and schools. For example, in December 2014, a school in Peshawar was attacked, resulting in more than a hundred innocent children. This is just one example of the havoc that these religious extremists have created on the country.

These extremists have established that no other religion, not even another religion is welcome in Pakistan. Moreover, the violence and bloodbath that has ensued have made even Muslims Islamophobic. But, unfortunately, the version of Islam that extremists are propagating is not known or accepted by an ordinary Muslim.

Religious groups like Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) have influenced many major universities and educational institutes in Pakistan, so much so that the student body, administration, and even the teachers are engulfed in their terror.[24]

Another impact of Islamophobia is the internalization of this concept. This term refers to accepting the stereotypes of one"s ethnic group. The extent of damage of the negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims on the Muslim children is very far-reaching. The Muslim children have become highly insecure about their religion. This issue is compounded as children move into adulthood. As a result, Muslims constantly have to subconsciously justify the practice of their faith.[25]

Solutions to Islamophobia:

The central enigma in Islamophobia is that so many people terrified of Islam have limited knowledge about Islam. Distrust and apprehension result from obliviousness and autocracy. Removing these paradoxical beliefs regarding Islam is essential to decreasing Islamophobia. The need of the day is to spread awareness about Islam based on science and knowledge, which has persuasion at heart. This can only be achieved if it is done without any worldly and political aims and if the conveyed facts are reliable and trustworthy.[26]

Islamophobia is based on the idea that Muslims are a threat to European culture and values. Challenging these notions would include highlighting the role that Muslims play in the fabric of society. Another Islamophobic perception is that Islam is a sexist religion, so advocating Muslim women and their work would help break down these misconceptions. The contorted ideas about the oppression of Muslim women need to be overturned by the Muslim women themselves, who must show the diversity of their lives through art, media, and culture.

Muslims need to reestablish that religion is just one aspect of a Muslim"s life, and Muslims are a diverse group of people, i.e., they differ in their race, language and culture. Just like media played its role in spreading Islamophobia, it can also play its role in diminishing it. Documentaries about victorious Muslims need to be broadcasted to destroy the labels against Muslims. A few steps have already been taken in this regard. For example, women in *hijab* were shown on the front cover of popular magazines like *Glamour* and *Allure*. The number of Muslim American journalists is also increasing, which is undoubtedly results in a positive change in the perception of Islam. In addition, Social media blogs, particularly by Muslim women, are casting a positive light on the role and freedom of Muslim women.

A balanced and authentic representation of Muslims in the movies needs to be done to demolish the stereotypes. A few steps have been taken in this direction as well in which Muslims are shown as "good guys" in different movies, such as "Bilal: A new breed of the hero" and "The reluctant fundamentalist.

In recent years, Muslims in the West have been striving to be recognized politically as well. In 2018, a record number of Muslim Americans ran for political office; 55 were elected to public offices. Other ways are the formation of Book clubs, interfaith picnics, interfaith service projects, etc.

Fabricating a strong personality based on unwavering belief and self-assurance can lead to an improved Muslim individual who is respected in society and feels himself to be in authority for contributing to the community as a whole. The communal spaces, and family gatherings, can aid in the negations of Islamophobic messages that can distress the core of a Muslim. Young Muslims should be taught how to face the onslaught of Islamophobic prerogatives and deal with the doubt-inducing claims leveled against Islam.[27] They need to be able to educate others about Islam. One must be able to differentiate between legitimate criticism and prejudice and can deal with each one accordingly.

In a nutshell, there is a need to reconstruct the notions surrounding Islam and Muslims. As a result,these notions shall be closer to the reality of Islam and

its teachings. For this to happen, a four-step approach is needed: defining Islamophobia, documenting and assessing the scope and nature of Islamophobia, deconstructing the narratives of Islamophobia, and finally reconstructing new and realistic narratives that portray Muslims as influential citizens in the fabric of the society.[28]

Conclusion:

The plague of Islamophobia has spread globally. The acceleration of the spread of Islamophobia is due to the misplaced notions of associating Islam with terrorism and radicalism. Media is one of the triggers of Islamophobia which often leads to discrimination against Islam.[29] However, Muslims can use this same forum to deconstruct the established notion of Islam and reconstruct the image that is closer to reality. The stereotypes about Islam can be rehabilitated if Muslims take a positive and constructive approach towards the issue.

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