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Islamophobia in the West: Past, Present, and Future

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

To our effort along this journey,

To our beloved ones, our families,

To those who believed in us, our true friends,

And to the ones who are no longer with us Amar GHEHEF, Bachir LACHEHEB, Nawel

DJEBAR; we dedicate this work.

Acknowledgments

By the name Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

First and foremost, praise is for Allah on whom we depend for help and guidance.

We would like to offer our sincerest gratitude to our supervisor **Dr. Ahmed ZELLOUMA** for his guidance, suggestions, and motivation.

Our profound gratitude goes to our teachers. Finally, our thanks go to the members of the jury for accepting to discuss and evaluate our work.

Abstract

The dissertation in hand investigates the topic of Islamophobia in the Western World. It discusses, mainly, its evolvement, relation to Orientalism, and how it developed to become violence against Muslims. The main aims of this research are tracing back the roots of Islamophobia; checking whether or not those roots emerge from pure racism; and predicting the future of this phenomenon as well as Islam in the world. This investigation comes to bring attention to the topic of Islamophobia and open doors of discussion and further research into this issue. This research paper belongs to the descriptive-analytical approach of research. Checking the validity of its hypothesis is done using a questionnaire submitted to a group of new Muslims living in the west. Discussion and analysis of the results of this research tool come to validate the hypothesis and confirm that Islamophobia is, indeed, made-up racism; being Muslim causes one to be treated negatively and differently in the west; and media is responsible to a large extent of creating and fuelling Islamophobia.

Keywords: Islamophobia, media, new Muslims, Orientalism, the west.

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The 20th century has marked the independence of the colonized countries which - in turn - led to the revolutionary movement of literature and civilization in these countries. Perhaps, one of the major figures that tackled the relation between the colonizing and colonized countries is Edward. W. Said. In his book “Orientalism” (2003) Said believes that the core of the relationship between the two countries is based on othering all which is not the “West” and labelling the “Africans”, “East-Asians”, and “Middle Eastern” as Orient. Said, also, talks about the Orient as a pure product of the West. Additionally, he discusses how the West delivers an untrue image of the Orient in all life domains generally and in political domain specifically using a historical technique called stereotyping. In the beginning, the West defined the others as the Orient, but by the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, the concept of the Orient narrowed down to become the Muslims. This shift has brought an “Anti-Arab” and “Anti-Islam” prejudice in the West which evolved to what is now called “Islamophobia”. This new born term “Islamophobia” stands for the fear of Islam and presumes that Muslims are inherently violent, primitive, alien, simple-minded, and illiterate. Due to the accumulation of the stereotypical images, the continuity of prejudice about Muslims, and terrorist attacks, Islamophobia has been used as a tool to justify the mistreatment of Muslims. Our motive of this research paper is to track the concept of Islamophobia throughout the timeline along with its representation in media and literature since its emergence. Therefore, we seek to unravel its real roots, the agenda it serves, and predict its potential future.

2. Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that there is a notable number of people embracing Islam all around the world, statistics show an increasing rate of religious hate crimes. This contradiction brings out the subject matters of this research which are the emergence of Islamophobia, the relation between

Islamophobia and Orientalism, the evolution of Islamophobia, and how it developed to become violence and hatred towards Muslims.

3. Research Questions and Research Hypothesis

For the purpose of achieving the research objectives, the following questions are asked:

- a. What are the roots of Islamophobia?
- b. How did Islamophobia evolve throughout time?
- c. What is the role of media in spreading Islamophobia?
- d. How are Muslims treated in the West compared to other religious groups?
- e. What are the possible scenarios concerning the future of Islamophobia/Islam?

In the light of the questions cited above, we hypothesize that Islamophobia is a made-up racism meant to orientalise and self-orientalise Muslims, and that media has the strongest role in spreading Islamophobia and shaping the new Islam.

4. Aims of the Study

This research paper seeks to demonstrate the historical evolution of Islamophobia as well as questioning whether Islamophobia is a phobia or a mere made-up racism. Additionally, this dissertation spotlights the imperialist agenda that Islamophobia has been serving throughout time since its appearance using media as a tool. This dissertation also attempts to predict the future of Islam in the world especially the west.

5. Research Methodology

This study adopts a historical, descriptive, and analytical method for explaining how Islamophobia emerged and evolved during the course of time in the Western world in addition to how media affected its spreading. Furthermore, it spotlights how the fear of Islam became racism that turned into false phobia. This qualitative study consists of two chapters. In the beginning of

the first chapter, the historical method is used. Then, the historical-descriptive method is used in the remaining part of the chapter in order to bring past and present events together and describe them. Furthermore, it is used to demonstrate the role of the Western media in spreading the fear of Islam. For the second chapter, the analytical method is used to analyse the data gathered from the questionnaire submitted to a group of new Muslims who live in the West. Also, it includes a discussion concerning the potential future scenarios of Islamophobia/ Islam.

6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research paper lies in the fact that it is one of very few works that deals with Islamophobia at the department of the Echahid Hamma Lahkdar University. Not only that, but it also deals with the topic from an angle that has never been seen from. Here, the topic is tackled from a triangle scope: Islamophobia, media, and Orientalism. In addition to that, this dissertation, exclusively, includes predictions of the phenomenon partially derived from a questionnaire submitted to a group of new Muslims living in the west.

7. Structure of the Study

Our dissertation consists of two chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature, and the second one includes the empirical part of the study. Chapter one, on the one hand, provides information concerning the evolution of Islamophobia throughout history, starting from its emergence until the present day. The chapter also shows the representation of Islam in international media. It also deals with the concept of Muslim extremism. On the other hand, chapter two is devoted to the collection and analysis of the subjects' answers to the given questionnaire. Last, it lays out the predicted futures of Islamophobia/Islam.

CHAPTER ONE

The Evolvement of Islamophobia and the Role of Media and Muslim Extremism

Chapter One: The Evolvement of Islamophobia and the Role of Media and Muslim Extremism

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Introduction

The first chapter aims at giving an insightful view about the emergence of Islamophobia in relation to Orientalism and its development, as well as the contribution of Media and Muslim Extremism in this aspect to better understand the subject in hand. Firstly, the chapter opens with a historical background of Orientalism by defining key terms of Said's theory: "Other" and "Otherness" and how it evolved to become Islamophobia. It also explains how the fear of Islam resulted in a hostile treatment towards Muslims, especially women in western societies. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the representation of Islam in Arab and Western Media. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview about Muslim extremism discussing its emergence, its representation in the Western Media, and its role in increasing the fear of Islam in the West.

This is one way of writing an introduction, but a better way is talking about the topic of the chapter, not its content. Do not worry if you sound repetitive.

1.1. From Orientalism to Islamophobia

The term Orientalism has been outwardly a discourse of Western expertise on the East, its people, land, and culture; but Edward Said's Orientalism presented a radical change to the word Orientalism by explaining how the West used its power and knowledge to create two different cultural worlds to assert their own rules, interests, and presenting themselves as the universal position whereas presenting the East and Easterners as an object of interest. By the end of his book "Orientalism", Said draws attention to the most recent manifestation of Orientalism in which the East became the Muslim other. This reformulation, later on, was supported by the representation of Muslims as others in the Western media resulting in the rise of Islamophobia.

1.1.1. Edward Said's Theory of Orientalism

Edward W. Said (1935-2003) is a political activist with Palestinian-American roots. He is also an academic man, writer, and literary critic. He is well-known for his book "Orientalism" which is one of the most powerful scholarly books of the 20th century, his book was published in 1978 (Britannica, 2021).

The publication of his book *Orientalism* marked a radical transformation of certain stereotypical ideas about the East such as being primitive, backward, barbarism, and illiterate which are imposed by the West. He studied the historical development of Orientalism.

In his book, Said (2003) mentioned three main definitions of the term Orientalism. The first one is academic. Said stated that "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient - and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist - either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said, p. 2). Said, then, gave a more general definition to this term by stating that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, p. 2). The last definition which he gave of Orientalism is that it is "something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two" to come to the point that "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, p. 3).

In the first chapter, Said described the evaluation of the term Orientalism throughout the 18th to the 20th centuries by setting up arguments focusing on the view of early anthropological orientalists. It is believed that these Orientalists structured the world as two opposing elements. On the one hand, there are the *Occident* who are eastern white people. On the other hand, there are non-white eastern societies. It can be noticed that the former are believed to be central and superior, but the latter are marginal and inferior. Through this self-proclaimed superiority, western scholars believed that they are fit to represent the Orient since the Orient cannot represent himself. Said's

main concern in this chapter is to clarify that due to the Western's intentions and plans, the West was not neutral in dealing with the Orient.

In the second chapter, Said focused on the construction of power from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The power over the Orient is the result of the accumulated knowledge gained by western scholars about the Orient as exotic, not because they are grounded in reality, but because they exist in the first place and are apparently backed by authority. In this chapter, Said analysed the works of Earnest Renan and Silvester de Sacy to show the discrimination and prejudice in their works. At the end of the chapter, it comes to our realization that Said described how the image of the Orient is a result of the travellers' experience.

In the third chapter of the book, Said described the two forms of Orientalism *Latent* and *Manifest* with the first being the characteristics of the Orient as viewed by the Western Oriental, and the latter being the visible characteristics and features of the Orient, and how they failed to provide knowledge about the Orient. In addition, he also described the difference between the French and English pilgrims. Furthermore, he highlighted the shift following World War I from Orientalism in Europe - which was centred around linguistics, and Orientalism in the United States of America - which was centred around the social sciences. For that, he warned against the practice of generalization in human sciences. He concluded the chapter by arguing that the traits of Orientalism still exist to this day.

Edward Said included an afterward to this book in 1994 to address several claims from critics who labelled his work as "anti-western" by claiming that he is not supported by Islamism either. He explained that Orientalism is written to showcase how the Orient is "Othered" by the West. A consistent theme of Said's work is how the Orientalists narrowed down the term "Orient" by the end to be merely "the Arab" or "Muslims".

1.1.2. The Otherness of Islam

1.1.2.1. The Definition of Other and Otherness

The notion “Other” is a result of the continuous Western Prejudice against the East throughout the pre-existing dichotomies of “Us” versus “Them”, “Good” and “Evil”, the “Centre” and the “Margin”, and the “Rational West” and “Irrational East”. In Said’s perspective, this notion is a prejudiced image of the Orient that has been created and perpetuated through the Western discourse.

Said claims that each age creates its own “Others”. He said:

The construction of identity - for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, *is* finally a construction involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us". Each age and society re-create its "Others" (Said, p. 332.)

The second notion “Otherness” is defined by Jean-François Staszak (2009) as follows:

Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us,” the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them,” Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state it naïvely, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. Thus, biological sex is a difference, whereas gender is otherness. The creation of otherness (also called *othering*) consists of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups: them and us. The out-group is only coherent as a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity. This lack is based upon stereotypes that are largely stigmatizing and clearly simplistic. The in-group

constructs one or more others, setting itself apart and giving itself an identity.

Otherness and identity are two inseparable sides of the same coin. The Other only exists relative to the Self, and vice versa. (pp. 43-44.).

1.1.2.2. The Portrait of Islam as Other in the Western Media

The media all over the world is considered as the most influential means of communication, which shapes the view of people in every aspect of life. One of the main methods used in the media is called “framing”, which is when a certain little piece of information is spotlighted and elevated in silence. The Muslim community believes that the media’s use of framing causes fear of Islam, but this is not to say that the media is the only cause of this fear. However, it is fair to say that it is the most accessible mean to spread such ideas amongst people and societies. The explicit hostility against Islam can be traced throughout history as far as the 19th century, for example, Judge Stephen Field, U.S. Supreme Court, May 25, 1891, said: “The intense hostility of the people of Moslem faith to all other sects, and particularly to Christians, affected all their intercourse.” (*American Islamophobia Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear*, p. 45).

On April 19th, 1995, Connie Chung wrote a report concerning the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City stating the following: “this is the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil. A U.S. government” source has told CBS News that it has Middle Eastern terrorism written all over it” (*American Islamophobia Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear*, p. 70).

Furthermore, Greenslade said that the general response of the British media to asylum and immigration is typical of the following comments by the famous former editor of The Times, Charles Moore: “Britain is basically English speaking, Christian and white, and if one starts to think it might become basically Urdu speaking and Muslim and brown, one gets frightened” (2005, p. 6).

The 9/11 attacks paved the way for more aggressive prejudice against Islam. CNN (2013) released an article entitled “*U.S. Terrorist Attacks Fast Facts*”, which described the attack on The World Trade Centre and The Pentagon committed by Al Qaeda resulting in 3,000 deaths as a horrific terrorist attack.

In 2010, the French policymakers banned wearing the *veil* in public places. “*Is France Right to Ban the Burkini?*” an article by Micallef (2016) shows the controversy surrounding the French ban on Muslim veils and burqa-styled swimsuits.

1.1.3. The Rise of Islamophobia

The word Islamophobia is not new, it first appeared in the French form “*Islamophobie*” in the book “*Pelerinage*” written by the artist Etienne Dinet in 1918. According to Dinet (1918), the words “Islamophobe” (referring to a person) and “Islamophobie” (referring to a broader phenomenon) are used on several occasions throughout the book. Often, Dinet used the terms “Islamophobe,” “bitter enemy of Islam,” “Orientalist or ignorant” interchangeably to generally designate anyone who makes incorrect generalizations about Muslims, misrepresent the religion of Islam, or displays an unfounded hostility towards it.

In 1997, the term Islamophobia reappeared in a report entitled *Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for us all* by Runnymede. In its first edition, the article gave a brief definition of the term Islamophobia by referring to three different phenomena, which are:

- Unfounded hostility towards Islam,
- Practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and communities.
- Exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs (Elhani & Khan, 2017, p.1).

In the twentieth anniversary edition, the executives gave a more explicit definition of the term by saying that “Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism.” This is a short definition, so the editors have developed a broader definition based on the general definition of racism in the United Nations. The definition says:

Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (Elhani & Khan, 2017, p.1).

1.2. Islamophobia in the Present

1.2.1. The Fear of Islam

Nineteenth century Orientalism paved the way to several stereotypical ideas about Muslims and Islam that exist nowadays. The accumulation of such thoughts in western societies lead to a clash of civilizations between the Muslims and the West. By the end of the nineteenth century, many orientalist such as Joseph Ernest Renan depicted Muslims as irrational, lacking reason and intelligence. In his lecture “*Islam and Science*”, Renan (1883) stated that being a Muslim means rejecting the “European spirit” and all that makes it superior. Therefore, Renan did not hesitate to support the European military forces to suppress the "barbarians" among the colonized Muslims at the end of his speech, because he firmly believed that science "provides power in the service of reason." These scholarly studies throughout history in addition to, the horrific present events lead to the fear of Islam and Muslims.

1.2.2. The Treatment of Muslims in the Western World (Women)

The historically generated fear of Islam and the way that Western Media associate Muslims with acts of terrorism such as the news stories about incidents such as the 9/11 terrorist attack and the 7/7 bombing resulted in an aggressive attitude towards Muslims living in the west.

Abbas (2007) said, “in the current climate, Islam is under siege and Muslim women (and men) 'visible' in all Western societies are at risk of being Islamophobia victimization, labelling, stigmatization and violence.”

Unlike Muslim males, Muslim females are viewed as a vulnerable group in the politics of representation since they wear visible religion signs. In no other country is the debate about what Muslim women can and cannot wear more intense than in France. The initial controversy dates back to the late 1980s when a debate arose over whether Muslim girls in public schools should wear the hijab, which the French often refer to as the "veil" (le voile), and what is more widespread in Europe translated as "veil". The hijab is a piece of clothing that covers the hair but leaves the face exposed. It symbolizes the humility of many Muslim girls and women who choose to wear it. In the original controversy, a high school expelled three Muslim girls after they refused to remove their veils (The Fear of Islam).

1.3. The Representation of Islam in Media

1.3.1. The Representation of Islam in the Arab Media

As it is previously mentioned, Western Media has somehow or somewhat unified representation of Islam based on the Orientalists findings throughout history as being aggressive, violent, barbaric, and uncivilized. On the other hand, Arab Media cannot be considered as one entity since neither the “Arabic” nor the “Islamic” world forms a unified whole.

Arab Media can be categorized into two major groups concerning the representation of Islam. The first group did not focus on marketing a positive image about Islam and Arab Muslims neither

did it define a strategy by which they could correct international public opinions towards Islam especially after 9/11 attack. The figure below shows the quantitative analysis about the frequency of 4 concepts/word combinations: Islamism/terrorism; anger/violence; different values; freedom of speech. The results shows that concepts Islamism/terrorism (in 115 articles) and anger/violence (in 121 articles) are the most frequently used.

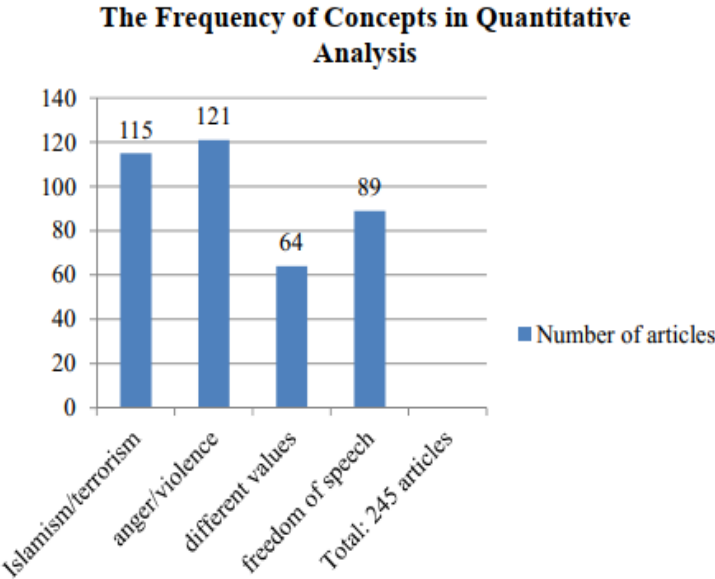


Figure 1.1. The Frequency of Concepts in Quantitative Analysis. A graph representing the number of times some concepts appear in international media (From Sutkute, 2019).

The second group, represented Islam and Muslims based on the same stereotypical ideas provided by the Western Media, which led Arab public to believe those ideas and justify the western treatments and rage towards Muslims. The table below explains how Orientalism shifted from its early concept to the American Orientalism and finally to Neo-Orientalism.

Table 1.1. Overview of the Types of Orientalism

	Early Orientalism	American Orientalism	Neo-Orientalism
Temporal Frame	Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries	The Cold War/Post Cold War era (1945–1990s)	Since the 1990s and more specifically since 2001
Paradigm	Colonial/Imperial paradigm	Cold War paradigm	“War on Terror” mutating into a “Clash of Civilisations” paradigm
Source	Britain and France (philologists and artists)	The United States (social scientists and media, and pro-Israeli circles)	Neoconservatives and pro-Israeli circles in the US and in Europe
Constructed Object(s)	The Orient and its peoples	- The USA - Arab and Muslim peoples	- Islam, the Muslim world and its peoples - Muslims in Western societies
Characteristics of the Constructed Objects	- Passive - Inferior - Backward	- USA: benevolent superpower - Orient: backward and violent	- Threat to Israel and the “West”
Agenda	- Domination - Colonisation	- US geostrategic interests - Economic interests - Israel’s security	- Israel’s worldview and interests

The evolvement of the types of Orientalism throughout time (From Kerboua, 2016).

However, the last decade marked the appearance of several Muslim-Arab influencers who are trying to provide the correct image of Islam and Muslims through their different platforms (YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook), such as: Ala Hamdan, Khalid Al Ameri and his wife Salama Mohamed.

1.3.2. The Representation of Islam in the Western Media: A Comparison between Europe and the United States

The historical clash between anti-Muslims and Muslims had rooted since the birth of Islam. This sentiment had grown and expanded by time. The people with these feelings used modern day technologies to spread their sentiments; the western social media has always shed the light on Muslims and Islam, as it made sure to create a dark side for the believers of Islam. However, there are two poles for the representation. As a start, there is the European one then the American.

1.3.2.1. The American Representation

Alsutany (2012) argued that from the late 1940s to the 1970s and even 1980s, the image of the Arab lazy chief on the throne evolved into a new image of a wealthy and gorgeous oil chief threatening the American economy and a dangerous terrorist threatening national security. During World War II, they were portrayed as seductive harem girls and belly dancers. In the first ten years after the Second World War, from a representative point of view, the image of Arab women has largely disappeared, but in the 1990s and 1970s they turned into sexy but deadly terrorists and in the 1980s as veiled and oppressed. Alsutany also argued that such images make it difficult to interpret the combination of Arabic and Muslim languages and to speak the language accurately. Therefore, when she talks about the representation of an identity that can be Arab or Muslim, and refers to a combined identity, she uses the term Arabic/Muslim. "Whenever there is a need to name another identity, whether it is Arab, Muslim, Arab American or American Muslim, this is the term I use". She uses the term "Arab and Muslim identity" more often to understand that a particular identity can be an American. This is especially important because after September 11, Arabs and Muslims in the United States seem to be sympathetic, but Arabs and Muslims have no sympathy. However, because the threat of "dorms" penetrates all Arab People and Muslims, the identity of Muslims has become suspicious, and "good" Arabs and Muslims have helped the United States fight Arab Muslim terrorism, whether American or not (P. 8).

Historically, TV series and movie auditions have encouraged this merger. TV dramas have involved the phenotype of Arab or Muslim "race" and the emergence of novels, which also implies that Arabs and Muslims may have racial characteristics. The main terrorist in *Sleeper Cell* is an Arab/Muslim, but is played by Israeli Jewish actor Oded Foa, who previously played an Arab role in an Arab movie, *The Mummy* (1999, 2001). In the second season of *24*, the Arab terrorist is played by the Mexican-American Francesco Quinn (his father Anthony Quinn often plays Arab roles). In the fourth season of *24*, the Arab-Muslim terrorist Marwan Habib was played by South African actor Arnold Vosloo. He also starred in *Ancient Mummy* (as an ancient Egyptian People)

(1999, 2001). The Hispanic Nestor Serrano, the Iranian Shore Aghdashloo, and the Iranian Jonathan Adhant play the horrible dorm family: mother, father and teenage son. These include Cuban American Tony Plana and South Asian Anil Kumar. In the 6th Season of 24, the British Sultan Alexander Siddig played Hamri Al-Assad, a reformed terrorist who supported the CTU's investigation. Also, American CTU agent Nadia Yasir is played by Mexican, Hungarian, and Romanian Marisol Nichols. The villains are played by Cal Penn, Sean Majumder, and Adonis Maropolis who are South Americans and Greeks (Alsultany 2012).

Media plays a vital role in transforming the Middle East (especially Islam) into a meaningful place for Americans. This pedigree of the origin of the commercial media's threat to Arab terrorists shows that although September 11 is a new historical moment, it is also part of a longer story in which the media prepares the audience for the disintegration of Arabs and Muslims, patriarchy/misogyny, then Muslim terrorism.

1.3.2.2. The European Representation

Amir Saeed stated that Gilroy (1987) believes that media discussions have led to the view that minorities cannot fully participate in British culture because they are described as "other". In addition, it can be seen from these speeches that Muslims are incompatible with the local culture and therefore cannot adapt to the "British way of life." In short, they cannot be British because their culture is not suitable for them (Gilroy 1987).

There are many reasons for the poor understanding of Islam in the Western media (Poole and Richardson, 2006). Said (1981) believes that the main reason is that the West has its own "experts" (reporters, commentators, scholars/scholars, etc.) on Islam. He said that the problem is that "we" are the West, and we represent "them" (the East), so "they" does not mean "themselves." Said and Drainville (2006) argued that such ... binary conceptions not only depict all things oriental as 'other', but also define Islam as the 'other' religion to Christianity. With the 'other' constantly described as inferior, even barbaric, it is easily accepted by a Western that terrorism stems from

Islam (Saeed and Drainville 2006, Teaching and Learning Guide for: Media, Racism and Islamophobia: The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media).

The role of the media in representing Muslims/Islam is critical to how British Muslims are treated as British citizens. Cottle (2000, 2) eloquently summarized the relationship between representation and belonging as follows:

It is in and through representations, for example, that members of the media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who ‘we’ are in relation to who ‘we’ are not, whether as ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ ... ‘the west’ and the ‘rest’.

Saifuddin Ahmed and Jörg Matthes (2016) conducted a study concerning “*Media, Muslims, and the West*” which resulted in the following table:

Table 1.2. List of Countries by Research Ranking

Research ranking	Researched country	Number of studies	Overall research %	% of Muslim population
1	USA	99.03	28.7	0.8
2	United Kingdom	69.95	20.28	4.6
3	Australia	38.5	11.16	1.9
4	Germany	14.12	4.09	5
5	Canada	13.5	3.91	2.8
6	Netherlands	10.75	3.12	5.5
7	France	9.62	2.79	7.5
8	Iraq	9.5	2.75	99
9	India	6.5	1.88	14.6
10	Denmark	6	1.74	4.1
11	Iran	6	1.74	99.4
12	Egypt	6	1.74	94.7
13	Italy	5	1.45	2.6

14	South Africa	5	1.45	1.5
15	Saudi Arabia	5	1.45	97.1
16	Afghanistan	5	1.45	99
17	New Zealand	4	1.16	0.9
18	Syria	4	1.16	90
19	Palestine	3	0.87	97.5
20	Indonesia	2.5	0.72	88.1
21	Philippines	1.5	0.43	5.1
22	Sweden	1.5	0.43	4.9
23	Switzerland	1.17	0.34	5.7
24	Algeria	1	0.29	98.2
25	Argentina	1	0.29	2.5
26	Austria	1	0.29	5.7
27	Greece	1	0.29	4.7
28	Hong Kong	1	0.29	1.3
29	South Korea	1	0.29	0.2
30	Malaysia	1	0.29	61.4
31	Mali	1	0.29	92.4
32	Nigeria	1	0.29	47.9
33	Russia	1	0.29	11.7
34	Turkey	1	0.29	98.6
35	Uzbekistan	1	0.29	96.5
36	Yemen	1	0.29	99
37	Sri Lanka	0.5	0.14	8.5
38	Spain	0.2	0.06	23
39	Belgium	0.17	0.05	6.1
40	No country focus	4	1.16	–

A table representing the ranking of frequency of Googling the concept of Islam per country

(From Saifuddine & Görg, 2016).

The results show that the media discourse with 9/11 as a catalyst inspired Said's Orientalist approach to construct the meaning and characteristics of Muslims as "others" in a free society. After September 11, the international media paid more attention to Muslims and Islam, especially the Middle East. In addition, the murder of Theo Van Gogh (2004) and the controversy surrounding the comic "Jyllands-Posten Muhammad (2005)" triggered the inclusion of Muslims in the non-Muslim majority of social issues, as well as the Madrid (2004) bombings in London (2005), Toronto (2006), Mumbai (2006), and Glasgow (2007) highlight the threat posed by Muslim extremism around the world. As a result, we found numerous studies on 9/11, immigration, terrorism and war. This thematic model links Muslims and Islam with ideals of terrorism, violence, and orthodoxy, highlights the religion as a threat of a resurgent atavism, and calls to mind Said's criticism of the media (Said, 1978; Said, 1981).

1.4. Muslim Extremism

1.4.1. The Emergence of Muslim Extremism

According to Muslim scholars, the manifestation of extremism is not a recent phenomenon. Actual extremism usually manifests itself in one form. This extreme form is often repeated in any situation or circumstance due to the actions or activities of people in different societies. According to Thameem Ushama (2014), the events referring to turmoil (fitnah) is mentioned in a Prophet's tradition (Ushama, 2014). Someone mentioned that the metaphor of "breaking the door" (using the Arabic word "qasr al-bab") is a symbol of extremism. It refers to the assassination of Umar the second caliph of the Islamic State, and the real beginning of the fitnah. According to Muslim historians, it is said that under the guidance of personal interests, biased people force others to retaliate against Uthman Ibn Afan, the third caliph of the Islamic State, for killing Umar until the leader reached out and killed him. Then, his murder caused a fierce turmoil, leading to disagreements between the Prophet's companions (may they rest in peace). After this incident, a group of people realized that it was necessary to retaliate for Uthman's

murder, while others suggested that it be postponed until the state's power is stable and strong (Jali, pp. 29-30). Then, the Battle of Camel took place, the prophet's widow Aisha (Aisha) is on one side, and his son in law, Ali ibn, Abi Talib (Abi Talib), the fourth Calipha in the Islamic State, is on the other side. Muslims claiming justice did not initiate this movement; on the contrary, the relationship of interest stimulated this work and brought serious consequences. Therefore, this is the introduction of extremism into Muslim society.

Then, after the Battle of Camel, the Battle of Kiffin took place between Ali with his followers and Muawiyah with his followers. This struggle had a major impact on the spread of chaos. Due to the unrest, two extreme factions emerged, namely Kharijites and Rafidite (Ibn Taymiyyah, AH 1372, page 308). They deviated from the practice and wisdom of the prophet and never cared about early unity, integrity, and dignity of early Muslims and reached the climax of emotion.

Secondly, ideational roots for Extremism which is on opinions and thoughts that are inseparable from the root cause. There is a connection between the early roots and later thoughts. To understand the real situation, the roots of ideology are divided into two types. The first is the ideological roots of the ideas on which most people are based. The second is the flaws or imperfections in the ideal structure, represented by ignorance, which means lack of knowledge, insufficiency or lack of perfection or absence of methodology (Ushama, 2014).

Thameem Ushama (2014) stated that some Muslims, especially young people, believe that the lack of the Islamic system leads to confrontation, hostility and negative behaviour. They believe that the following phenomena can cause extremist behaviours:

- Indictment and contempt.
- Domination of materialism.
- Absence of Muslim scholars' role.
- Oppressions of Islamic movements.

- Restrictions for Islam and approval for secular trends.
- Critical economic situations and social discrimination.

All in all, it can be noticed that extremism has existed since the advent of religion and some sects have adopted it, while contemporary extremism has historical, ideational, and psychological roots.

1.4.2. The Representation of Muslim Extremists in the Western Media

The Western representation of Muslims and Arabs is not a recent fabrication, but since the first contact with Arabs and Muslims, it has been effectively and deeply rooted in the conceptualization of the West. Since the Middle Ages, especially during the Crusades, and as the Arabs expanded in Europe into the third millennium, the West has been encouraging almost the same stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims.

The West maintains a persistent conceptualization of Arabs and Muslims as alien "other" or rather "enemy". The general opinion of American matches that of the Europeans which summarizes that Islam is a threat to the West. In this sense, the West has the right to defend itself from such "threats" and can therefore mobilize various materials: military, economic, and media. Whether on television or in print, it is not surprising that Western media reports maintain an ever-distorted image of Arabs and Muslims. Fabricated stereotypes of Islam are omnipresent in Western media. It means peace and is seen as essential to maintaining the prevailing harmony and sympathy with non-Muslims. On this basis, jihad turns out to be the second alternative when peace is not respected. However, the concept of jihad has suffered several distortions. First, it connects Muslims with bloodthirsty people and makes them a nation loving violence. Then the West removes the concept of jihad from its mere religious and spiritual connotation and reduces it to a mere act of terrorism.

Linked with the falsification of facts and the stereotypes of Eastern culture, Arab clothing has not escaped the contempt of the Western media. The headscarves and veils are reduced to the level of masks worn by terrorists, so as not to interrupt people is recognized. The veil and shawl of Islam lack the religious and cultural symbolism of chastity.

The distortion of Arab identities also includes their complexion. To portray Arabs, some Western artists resorted to imagination, rather than empiricism. Similarly, Arab and Islamic art will not avoid the process of distortion and change. The media assigned three categories of Bs to Arab Muslims: billionaires, bombers and belly dancers. Its sole purpose is to ridicule, erase Arab art, or make it unusable compared to Western art.

In conclusion, Western media has the responsibility to convey racism and fabricated prejudice against Arabs and Muslims to the Western public. When Western media changed their views on Arab Muslims, they received a response from the audience.

1.4.3. The Role of Muslim Extremism in Increasing Fear of Islam in the Western World

After the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks that were/are believed to be in the name of Islam and committed by Muslims or Muslim extremists, experts and human rights monitors reported that widespread negative views of Islam and fear of Muslims (not just Muslim extremists) helped recognizing discrimination and normalizing violence in relation with Muslim communities. In addition, some countries restrict religious freedom and the basic fundamental rights of Muslims. Muslims are always ashamed, stigmatized, and feel like Suspicious communities. As a result of these actions, "anti-Muslim hatred" has become diffused in Western societies (Ridouani, 2011).

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter is that the concept of fearing Islam is a result of Orientalizing “The Other” to become solely the Muslim where they is considered to be hostile, violent and terrorist. These stereotypical ideas are still carried out and fed till the present day and promoted by the Arab and Orientalist Media to fulfil certain agendas. The constructed ideological thoughts in media that considered Muslim minorities as the alien Other resulted in a new racist thinking and different treatment. Furthermore, the focused attention on Muslim Extremism by western media helped in promoting the Anti-Muslim ideas by considering it the true image of Islam.

CHAPTER TWO

Questionnaire Analysis and the Future Global

Concept of Islam

Chapter Two: Questionnaire Analysis and the Future Global Concept of Islam

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Introduction

The present study investigates the presence of Islamophobia, and the treatment of Muslims in westerns countries and the predicted future of Islam in the world. This chapter is dedicated to the practical study of this dissertation. Our aim throughout this chapter is to test the hypothesis we set at the beginning of this research: whether Islamophobia is a made-up racism meant to Orientalize and self-Orientalize Muslims, and that media has the strongest role in spreading Islamophobia and shaping the new Islam, this is done through a questionnaire with New Muslims in Western societies.

This chapter provides a questionnaire analysis and the future global concept of Islam. The questionnaire analysis consists of a description of the questions and the intention behind using them as well as some information about the target population. It also contains discussions and analysis of the results of each question. The last element of this chapter provides various predictions concerning the global future of Islam.

2.1. Questionnaire Analysis

2.1.1. Questionnaire Description

The New Muslims' questionnaire which appears in the Appendix at the end of this dissertation was submitted to 12 New Muslim living in Western societies whom we could reach. The New Muslims whom we asked to answer the questionnaire were either from Europe, America, Asia, or Australia. We have done so because we believe that they are the most suitable ones to have insights about Islam and Islamophobia before and After Embracing Islam. It is important to say the subjects we could contact for this questionnaire are all females.

Our questionnaire consists of 12 questions. We did not use any questions of personal information (name, social status, or job) about the subjects because it has no relevance to our research. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: the first part includes 08 general questions whereas the second includes 04 questions directly linked to the aims of our dissertation.

2.1.2. Discussion of the Results

Q1: Who or what first introduced you to Islam?

Table 2.1. Who or What first introduced New Muslims of Embracing Islam

	Friends	Relatives	Others
Number	03	03	06
Percentage	25%	25%	50%

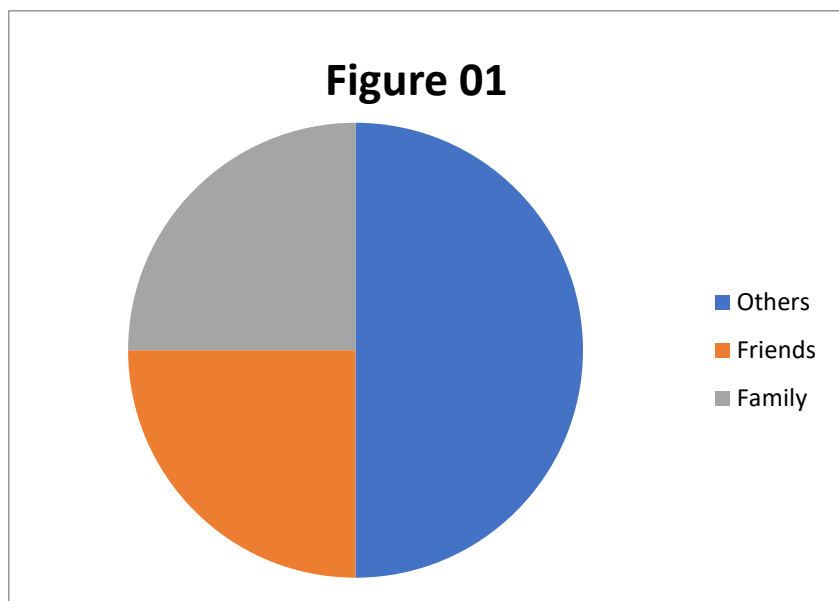


Figure 2.1. Who or What first introduced New Muslims of Embracing Islam

Based on the result illustrated on the table and the graph 1 above, we notice that about a quarter (25%) of the subjects were introduced to Islam by relatives or family members. Also, almost an equal number of respondents (25%) had their friends in real life, school, or online as a source of embracing the religion. Last, about a half of the respondents to the questionnaire said that they embraced Islam because of other reasons such as travelling and “Dawa”.

In the results shown above, we notice the absence of media as a source of embracing Islam, yet all respondents’ motive to do that was a member in the very close social circle. This can be because

media there is not promoting a true and positive image of Islam so as to make people understand thus embrace it.

Q2: When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?

Table 2.2. The Time When New Muslims Took their Shahada

	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2021
Number	01	02	03	05
Percentage	08%	17%	25%	42%

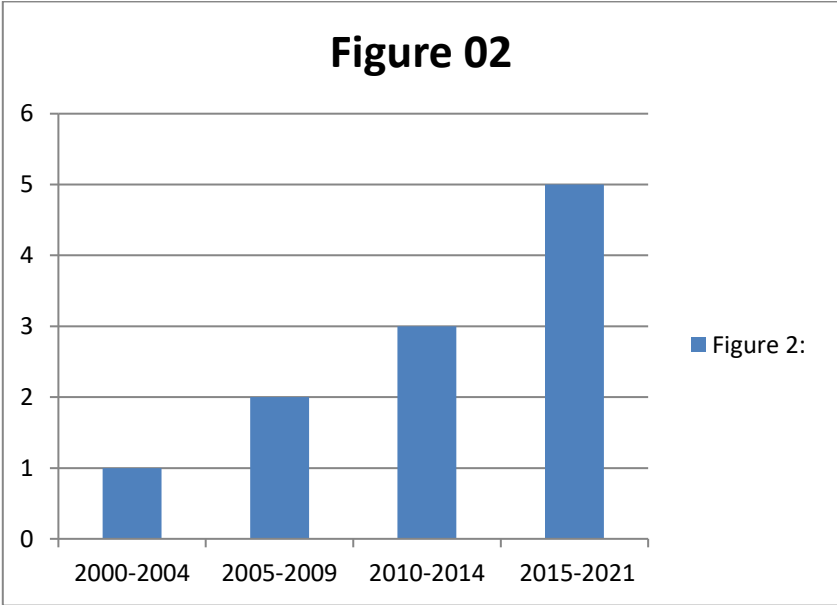


Figure 2.2. The Time When New Muslims Took their Shahada

According to the results demonstrated on graph 2, we notice that one subject embraced Islam during the period from 2000 to 2004. Whereas, from 2005 to 2009 there are two subjects who embraced Islam. While three subjects embraced Islam in the period between 2010 and 2014. Finally, the graph above shows that five respondents embraced Islam during the time span of 6 years from 2015 to 2021.

In the results illustrated above we notice an increase in the number of subjects embracing Islam especially in the period from 2015 to 2021. The Pew Research Centre article “Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World” gave an estimated number the growth of Muslim population in the U.S. These estimates are derived through a multistep process that combines information from the survey on the prevalence of Muslims among immigrants and other demographic groups with official Census Bureau statistics on the total number of people in the U.S. who fall into these groups (Lipka, 2017).

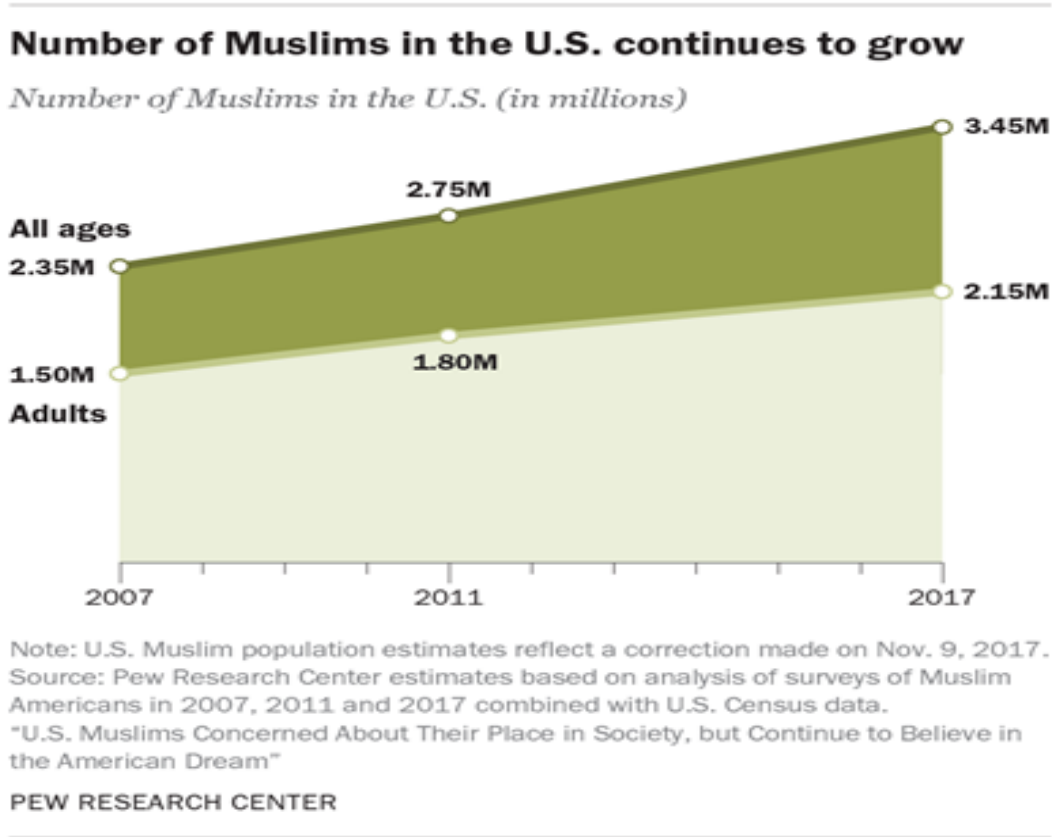


Figure 2.3. Growth of the Muslim Population in the U.S. (2007-2017)

This increase can be related to several factors such as the true image of Islam promoted by social media influencers, interactions with Muslims online or in real life, travelling, and Dawa.

Q3: Was it easy to take this decision?

Table 2.3. The Difficulty of Embracing Islam by New Muslims

	Easy	Difficult	Both
Number	06	03	03
Percentage	50%	25%	25%

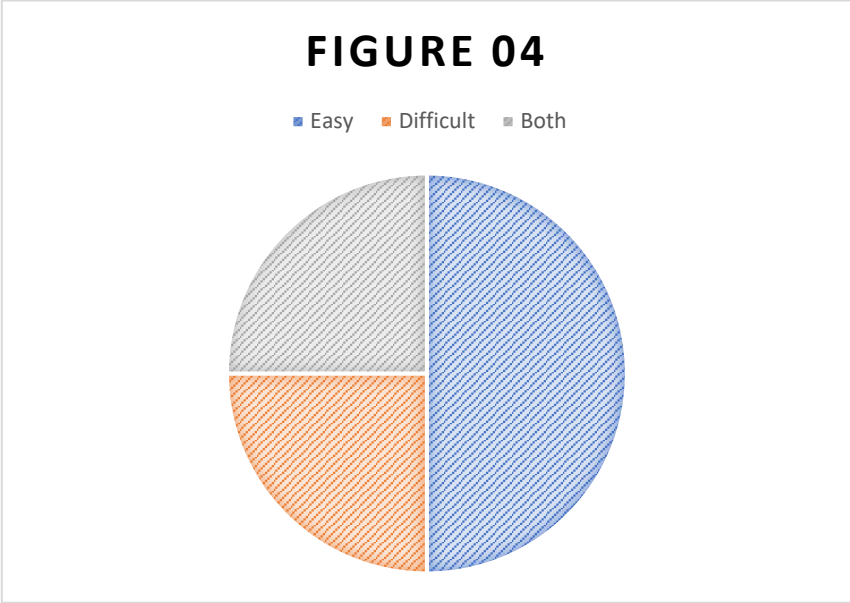


Figure 2.4. The difficulty of Embracing Islam by New Muslims

This question aims at spotting the light on a particular aspect of embracing Islam which is whether taking the decision was easy for them or not. The results above show that a quarter of respondents (25%) said that taking the decision was difficult. Meanwhile, a half of the respondents said it was fairly easy to take the decision of embracing Islam. Lastly, a quarter of the respondents (25%) stated that taking the decision was a combination of both.

In the results above, we notice that a half of the participants found it easy to embrace Islam, because after researching and knowing the true Islam, they generally came to a conclusion that Islam is the right religion. Participants stated that:

- ❖ “Islam is the true religion.”
- ❖ “Islam is definitely the truth.”
- ❖ “After getting to know the religion ... yes.”
- ❖ “Yes, because I felt it was the right thing to do”.
- ❖ “By the time I did my Shahada, it was a fairly easy decision as I had been thinking about it for so long already and I was very sure that I wanted to after all the learning I had been doing.”

Also, the participants who said that it was not easy for them justified it by saying that:

- ❖ “No, it was not a ‘simple’ decision, but rather after careful consideration. The decision to convert shouldn't be taken lightly or because the partner wants to.”
- ❖ “It was not easy at all because I had to make research and I didn’t have the family to live with in this new religion.”
- ❖ “It was not easy. I fought with myself and Shaytan for two years. I wanted to do everything right after my conversion: for example, Wearing the hijab straight away and I knew I wasn't ready at that point. But at some point, came the point where the fear was too great to die without a Shahada. So that, I would rather be a Muslim without a hijab than not a Muslim.”

Finally, the other participants stated that it was easy and difficult at the same time their explanations are the following:

- ❖ “In a way it was because I knew Islam was the truth, it was more so scary to start a new life in a way, and face all the challenges I knew were ahead”
- ❖ “No and yes.... I did some reading and had met a man I wanted to marry. So, I wanted to be with him and I knew quite a lot from my sister who had already converted in 1990.”
- ❖ “On one hand, it was very easy because I come from a believing family (Christianity). Religion and belief in God have always been very important to me. On the other hand, it was a bit difficult because all my family members are Christians.”

Q4: What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?

❖ **Before embracing Islam**

Table 2.4. New Muslims’ Perceptions about Islam before Embracing it

	Positive	Negative	Neutural
Number	03	07	02
Percentage	25%	58%	17%

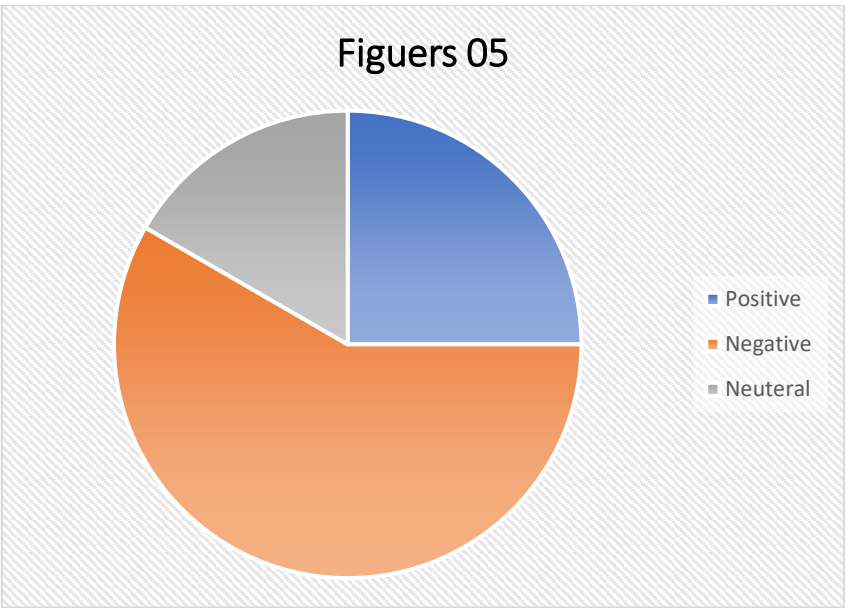


Figure 2.5. New Muslims’ Perceptions about Islam before Embracing it

❖ **After Embracing Islam**

Table 2.5. New Muslims’ Perceptions about Islam after Embracing it

	Positive	Negative	Neutural
Number	12	00	00
Percentage	100%	0%	0%

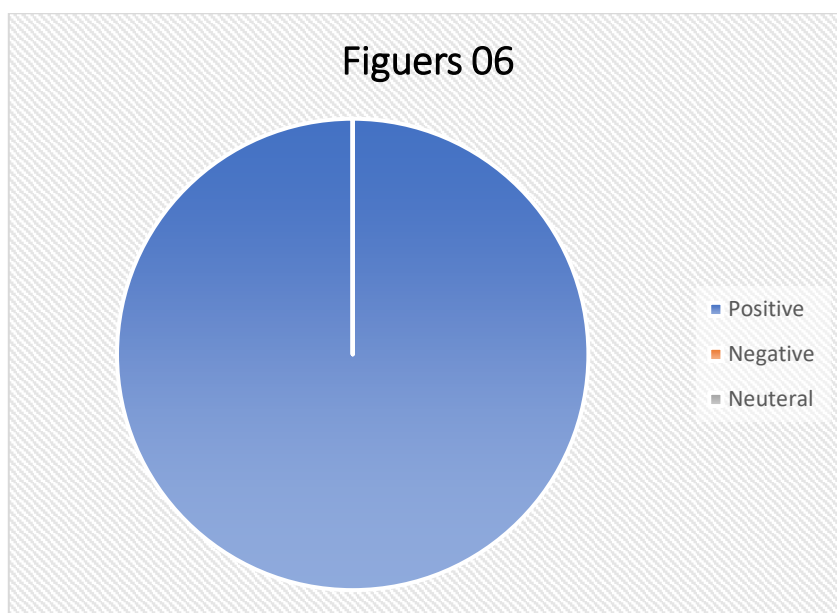


Figure 2.6. New Muslims' Perceptions about Islam after Embracing it

Based on the results illustrated in table 3 as well as graph 4 above, we notice that 58% of the subjects had a negative point of view about Islam. Meanwhile, a quarter (25%) of the subjects had a positive one, whereas (17%) of them had a neutral point of view about the religion before embracing it. Table 4 and graph 5 display the opinion of the subjects about Islam after embracing it which is 100% positive one.

As mentioned in chapter one, westerns tend to have a negative point of views towards Islam based on how media represents it. According to our participants' responses, they said that Media was giving misinformation about Islam for example, participants said:

✚ “I really didn't know much about Islam before I started learning, and a lot of the things I thought I knew were from negative media or from cultural representation rather than the religion and I can see that now.”

✚ “Actually, I only knew Islam from school and what television told me about it. So, I had an idea of a little bit negative nature about the religion. But when I learned about Islam, I learned that there is much misinformation about it.”

✚ “Before I dealt with Islam, I always thought that women were being oppressed. The men are allowed to do anything and the women have to sit at home. Then I always thought they

would be forced to wear a headscarf. The media has always suggested that religion is very violent because the man is also allowed to hit the woman.”

All the participants responded positively to the question about their perception concerning Islam after embracing it. Conducting their own research about it helped know the true Islam which is not what is presented by the Media. One of our subjects stated: “Nowadays, Islam is for me the perfect and peaceful way of life – a guideline from our creator.”

Q5: How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?

Built upon the answers of our questionnaire, the majority of the respondents on one hand had positive effects out of the decision of embracing Islam for example: being conscious and self-aware about the world around them, in addition to being grateful and peaceful with Allah and once self. On the other hand, the effect was negative in other aspects of life such as losing some or all friends, having disagreement or even conflicts with family members, and receiving hate messages and sometimes threats.

Q6: How did your social circle respond to your decision?

According to the answers of the respondents, we notice that almost all of them had similar experience with their families and friends. Where they responded by saying that their families and friends did not oppose to their decision. Whereas some of the subjects had a somewhat negative response from their families at first and they stated the following: “some family stopped talking to me, but after some time they got used to it and the family got ok with it.”

Q7: How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?

Table 2.6. The Treatment of the New Muslims before and after Embracing Islam

	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
			Verbal abuse	Physical abuse	Both
Number	03	02	01	03	03
Percentage	25%	17%	8%	25%	25%

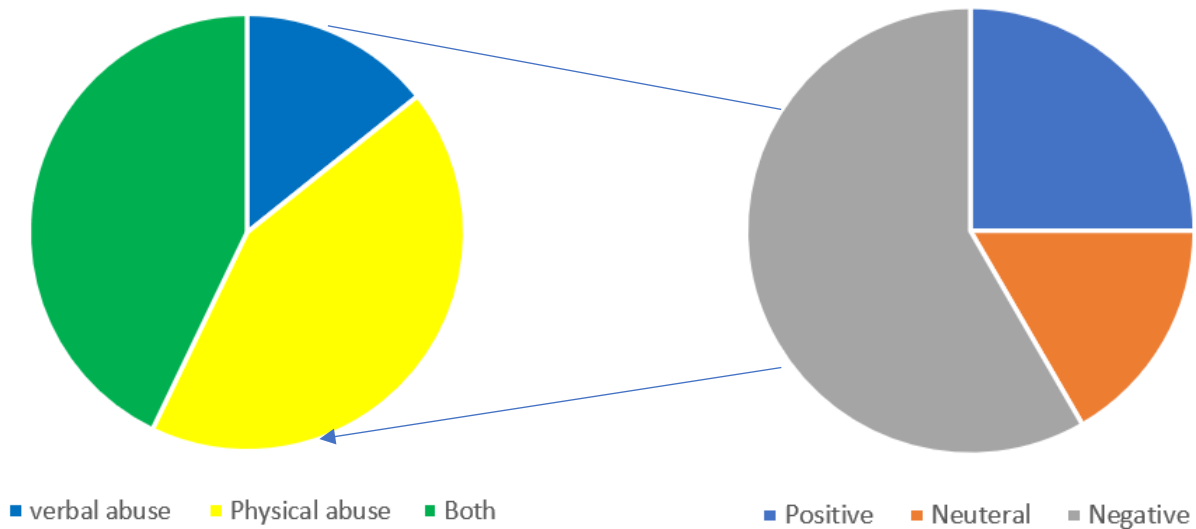


Figure 2.7. *The Treatment of the New Muslims before and after Embracing Islam*

Q8: Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate

These two questions form the basis of our research which is the westerners' attitudes towards Muslims. Table 07 and figure 07 demonstrate these attitudes. The results above show that 58% of our subjects have experienced negative treatment from their societies, these negative treatments are divided into three categories. The first one being verbal abuse which has been experienced by 8% of our subjects, the second category is physical abuse which has been subjected to 25% of our

participants. Similarly, 25% of our subjects have been victim of both verbal and physical abuse. Meanwhile, 17% of our respondents stated that nothing major has happened to them. Finally, 25% of our respondents said that they were treated positively by their communities.

According to the answers of respondents as well as the results above, we notice that the majority of our respondents have faced negative treatments from their communities such as harassment, beating, or restrictions from doing their daily errands (applying for job, renting, or even buying from grocery shops), staring and commenting on their way of dressing, and treated them as backward second-class people. Whereas a quarter of them have been treated positively. Yet, these positive attitudes could be because our respondents are not veiled or expressing Islam openly. One of our respondents stated the following “I was more or less "undercover" because nobody from the outside knew that I was a German Muslim.”. Some of our respondents have not noticed any remarkable change in people’s treatment; however, they claim that something is bound to happen: “As of yet I haven’t noticed a major difference in real life.”, and “Alhamdulillah I’ve never experienced any form of harassment in real life, only people staring, pointing, and talking about me, but I know it's going to happen one day. I’m bound to end up on the same bus or stand in the same shopping line as the mad racist guy who won't have an issue telling me how he feels.”

Q9: Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?

Table 2.7. The Existence of Islamophobia in Western Countries

	Yes	No
Number	12	00
Percentage	100%	0%

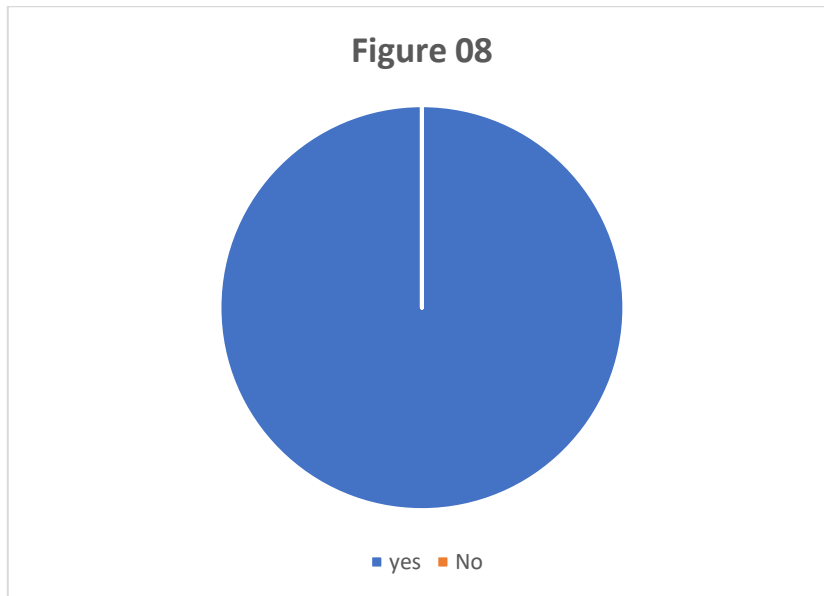


Figure 2.8. The Existence of Islamophobia in Western Countries

Based on the figure and table above, we notice that 100% of our participants believe that Islamophobia exists clearer in western societies than in other part of the world. All of our respondents agree upon the existence of Islamophobia in their societies. “Islamophobia is a major problem in the West, especially in Central Europe”, said a respondent.

Q10: Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?

Table 2.8. The Treatment of Muslims Compared to other Religious Groups in West

	Yes	No	Unanswered
Number	09	01	02
Percentage	75%	08%	17%

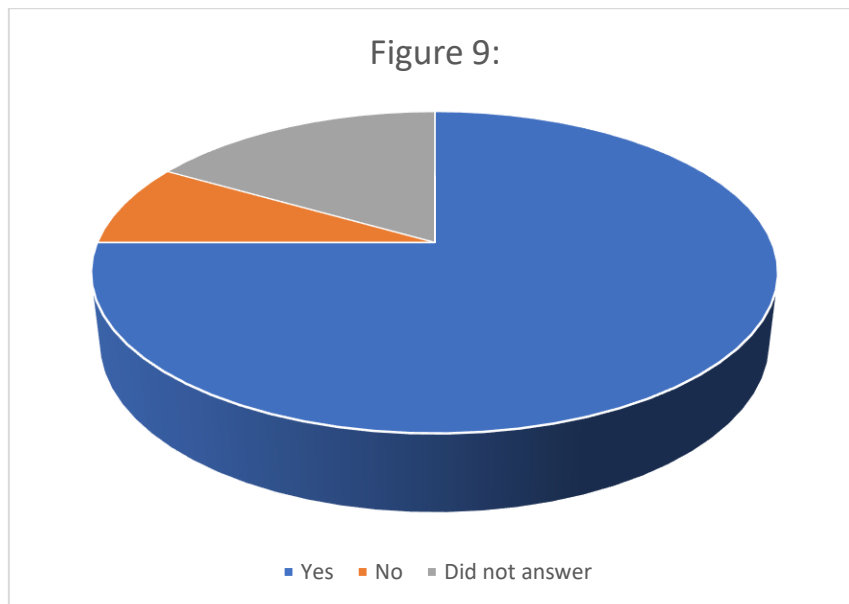


Figure 2.9. The Treatment of Muslims Compared to other Religious Groups in West

Referring to table 08 and figure 09, we observe that 75% of our respondents agree that Islam is more targeted than other religions in their societies. However, only 8% of them believe that there is no difference in how Islam is treated compared to other religions.

This question clarifies a main point in our research since it shows the discriminating attitude of western societies towards Islam compared to other religions. This can be because the accumulation of falsified information which is given to the people on a daily basis through media, TV shows, movies, and social media that lead to creating negative prejudice against Islam. Our subjects clarify their point of view by stating the following “Yes, a lot of people hate Islam and Muslims. So they treat us bad”, “Islamophobia is being injected into people's daily lives in movies, TV shows, social media, etc. There’s government Islamophobia and it is so clear, open, transparent, and accepted that is very hard to point out.”, “Yes, anything negative is amplified for Muslims and anything positive is (if anything) a small story which has no media attention.”, “I think the attitude against Muslims is worse than to other religions. Therefore, they are treated differently.”, and “Muslims are clearly treated as second class people in Europe and attempts are being made to deliberately restrict their rights. While Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews have no problem practicing their religion and there are hardly any attacks on their religious institutions,

practicing Muslims are always accused of Salafism and try to prevent religiosity by calling modern and non-compromising Muslims the "true Muslims" would like to pose and practicing as a threat.”

John L. Esposito in his book entitled *The Future of Islam* said:

If a group of Jews or Christians had been responsible for the bombing of the World Trade Centre, few would have attributed it to the beliefs of mainstream Judaism or Christianity. The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist was not attributed to something in mainstream Judaism; nor was the clergy sex abuse scandal attributed to the heart of Catholicism. The most heinous crimes committed by Jewish or Christian extremists are not tagged as reflections of militant or radical Christianity or Judaism. The individuals who commit such crimes are often dismissed as fanatics, extremists, or madmen rather than labelled Christian or Jewish fundamentalists. By contrast, too often the statements and acts of Muslim extremists and terrorists are portrayed as integral to mainstream Islam

Q11: Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fuelled by media?

Table 2.9. Sources of Islamophobia according to the Opinion of the New Muslims

	Media	Other
Number	10	2
Percentage	83%	17%

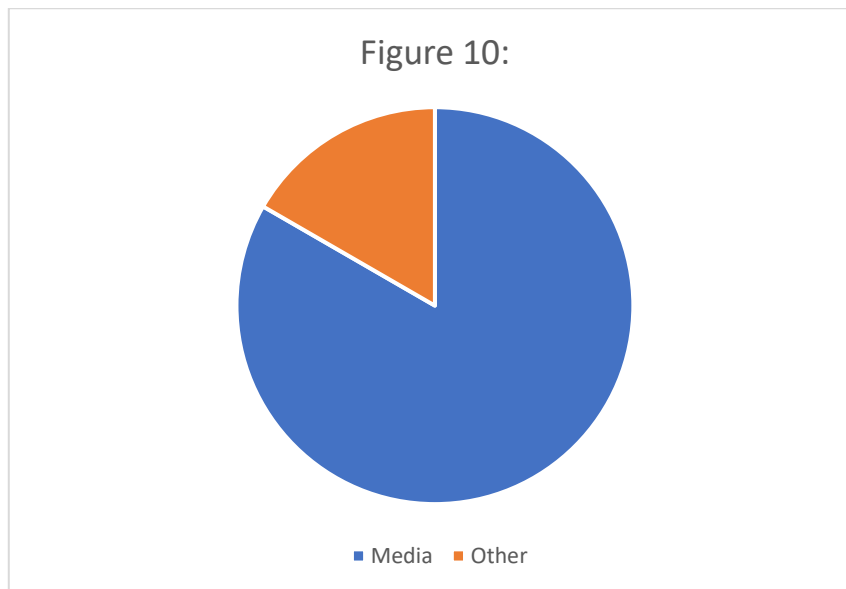


Figure 2.10. Sources of Islamophobia according to the Opinion of the New Muslims

According to the answers of our subjects, 83% agree that media is the main source of spreading Islamophobia; however, 17% said it is due to other sources.

This question is particularly interesting in our research because it is directly attached to the aim of our research which is questioning whether Islamophobia is a phobia or a mere made up racism. The majority of our respondents agree on that Media plays a huge role in fuelling the hatred against Muslims while the rest gave other sources of this hatred such as lack of knowledge and interest, and the misrepresentation of Islam by Muslims such as Muslim extremism and some Islamic countries. We notice from the answers of our respondents that Islamophobia is more than a simple phobia; nevertheless, it is a racist attitude towards Muslims and Islam.

Some of our subjects responded to this question and question number 9 as follows:

- ❖ “Some people believe what the media tells them, so it can cause hatred.”
- ❖ “Yes, hatred of Islam and fear of Islam are deliberately fuelled by the media.”
- ❖ “Islamophobia is a major problem in the West, especially in Central Europe. 90% of the blame are the media, which tell a lot of lies and are sometimes already brainwashing people, and 10% are the negative behaviour of Muslims in Europe.”

- ❖ “I think this phobia is far bigger and more pronounced in the new federal states. In my opinion, however, this phobia is a point of the lack of education or the lack of interest in dealing with Islam and reading about it and the negative reporting by the press.”

Referring back to our subjects’ answers, it is clear that Islamophobia as a phenomenon is backed up by Media’s misrepresentation of Islam to fuel people’s anger and support the hostile attitude against Muslims in order to serve a certain agenda. All media’s falsified representation of Islam resulted in a racist mindset about Islam in non-Muslim communities as well as Muslim ones too.

Q12: What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?

This question is one of the most interesting ones in our research because it deals with the future predictions concerning Islam in the West. As stated in our subjects’ answers, the future of Islam in the West can be categorized into two main views: optimistic and pessimistic.

The first view is more optimistic concerning the future of Islam in western countries. First of all, they believe that the western societies are on their ways of accepting Muslims as a part of them, not as a foreigner, margin, or an outsider. Some of our subjects stated the following: “I think Islam is becoming a part of the west”, and “I hope and wish for a better acceptance of Islam in Germany in the future.” They also believe that since Muslims are taking a part in representing themselves in social media and showing the true image of Islam, this gives westerners access to educate themselves about Islam. One respondent said: “Islam will keep growing! Muslims are more actively participating in the Media in a positive way to show our humanity and the beauty of our religion.” Finally, they believe that the Muslim community is going to grow more in the West, and they are hopeful to have the same rights and safety as any other ethnic group by stating the succeeding: “I see more and more people reverting to Islam from the west which in turn shows the truth of the religion to more families and friends.” Another added “I see many new reverts being born.”

The second view is more pessimistic. They believe that the future will be more difficult for Islam and Muslim; quoted from one of our subjects, “Unfortunately I think it will become more and more difficult for Islam and Muslims.” Furthermore, they believe that many Muslims are going to be forced to abandon their religion in order to live in peace in western societies. As one of our respondents said, “I notice more and more that many siblings are forced to abandon their religious side in order to please society and thereby get more security and rights.” In addition, one of our subjects believes that the religious aspect in Muslim families in western societies is decreasing which leads to a new Muslim generation adopting new a version of Islam that suits western ideologies. A participant stated that:

“The religion is properly taught in the family. Nowadays the religion has to be properly taught to the children in Muslim families. Unfortunately, I have seen or heard so often that many children who come from Muslim families have no idea about Islam. They don't fast in Ramadan; they don't pray, they don't go to the mosque. Unfortunately, one often sees younger women from Muslim families walking on the street with full make-up, wearing very figure-hugging clothes, smoking, going to the disco and not praying at all. If you ask why it is so, you get the simplest answer: ‘They were born in Europe.’ It has nothing to do with Europe, but I believe that it has nothing to do with Europe because I see big problems with the family and in upbringing of kids.”

2.2. Predictions of the Future of Islamophobia and Islam

One of the main points in our dissertation is discussing the predicted future of Islam. Referring back to question 12's discussion and analysis we can have certain views concerning Islam in the West in the coming times. Western Muslims have controversial opinions about Islam in the upcoming years.

On the one hand, some believe that Islam is on its way to prosperity in the West. They believe that there will be more acceptance towards Islam and Muslims and they will not be considered as alien; on the contrary, Islam and Muslims will be a part of the western societies. They also believe, that the mis-representation of Islam in the western Media may reduce and shift its focus into another subject, meanwhile Muslims will take over the role of representing themselves and Islam in social media platforms, and in Media in general. Furthermore, Westerns Muslims think it's likely that the Muslim community will flourish and grow in the upcoming years, since more people are going to be more educated about Islam like we saw in the discussion of the questionnaire, which will lead to more and more people embracing it with conviction.

On the other hand, some other Western Muslim are not as optimistic concerning the future of Islam in the west. Their beliefs are based on what is happening now in their societies for example, the hate and aggressive attitude from non-Muslims towards them that is growing by time; Media's method of covering events concerning Islam is only supporting these attitudes; the belief that Islam is a foreigner, and the number of people who are forced to reformulate or abandon the true principles of Islam so they can fit in the western societies' culture. All these factors are believed to lead people to misunderstand, malpractice, and eventually abandon the religion.

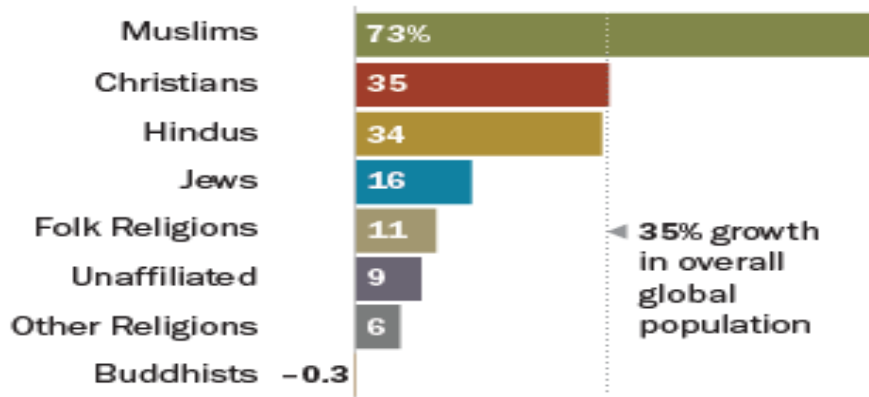
Since Islam is wide spread around the world with the estimated population of 1.8 billion people, we need to discuss its predicted future(s) worldwide. We believe that Islam may have different possible future(s) depending on the circumstances in the world.

One possible future is the Islamic communities may thrive and grow in the upcoming years around the world. This can be because of the acceptance of Islam world widely or the increasing number of people who are embracing it. According to the Pew Research Projections (2015), by 2050 there will be near parity between Muslims (2.8 billion, or 30% of the population of the world).

Islam Growing Fastest

Muslims are the only major religious group projected to increase faster than the world's population as a whole.

Estimated change in population size, 2010-2050



Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

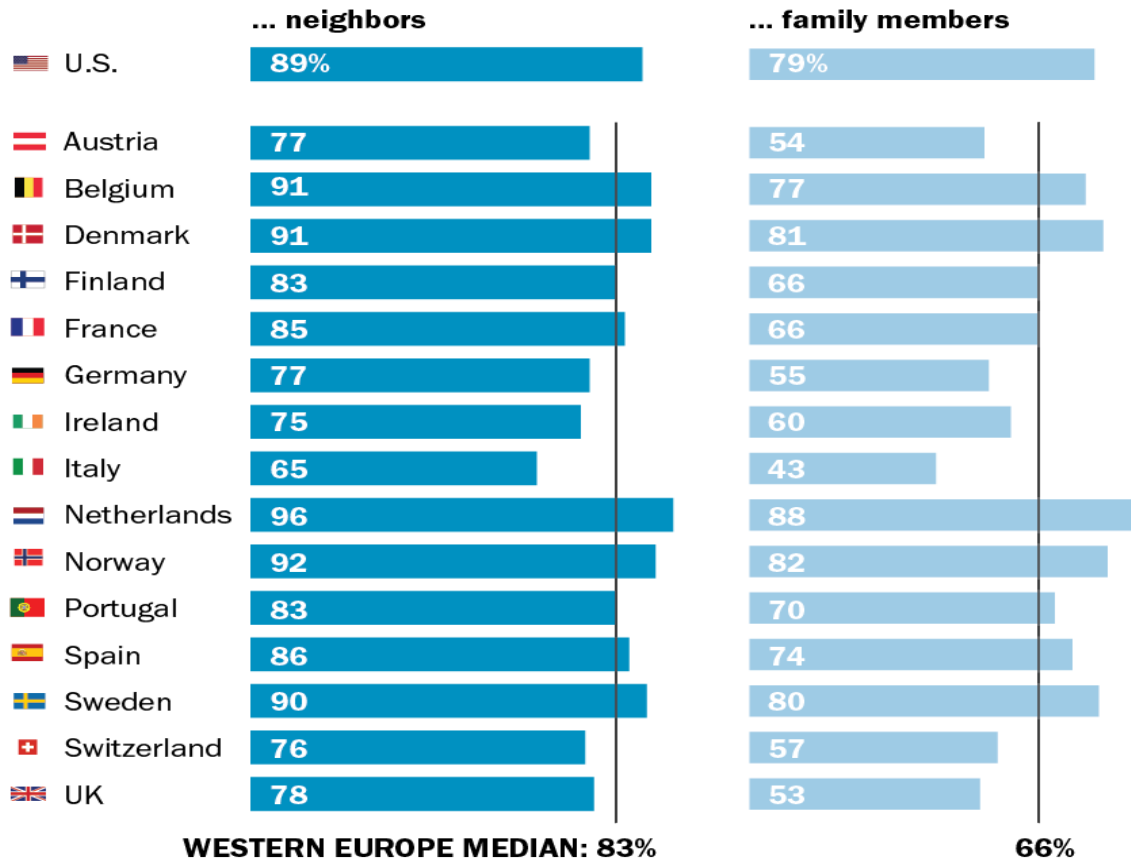
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 2.11. Estimated Growth of the Religious Groups' Population (2010-2050).

According to a 2017 Pew Research Centre survey, people in the U.S. and Europe have a similar opinion concerning whether Muslims can be their neighbours or even a part of their families, which is clarified in the figure below.

Across U.S. and Western Europe, most people say they would be willing to accept Muslim neighbors, family members

% who say they would be willing to accept Muslims as ...



Note: Questions asked of non-Muslims only.

Source: Western Europe data from survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. U.S. data from survey conducted Sept. 5-16, 2019.

“Being Christian in Western Europe”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 2.12. Acceptance of Muslim Neighbours and Family Members by Western Societies

Muslims believe in Allah’s saying in the Holy Quran: “O people! Behold, we have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another” (Surat 49, Verse13). Therefore, they appreciate the unity, humanity, and equality among people. This may lead them to try and break the barrier between them and non-Muslim communities who in return have to educate themselves in order to understand Islam. Both parts need to reach the realization that whether we like it or not we are inter-connected and co-

dependent so we have to try to accept the ideals of “We” rather than the ideals of “Us” versus “Them”.

In the modern world nevertheless, Islam may face more challenges to exist let alone to prevail. The relation between modernity and Islam may result in changes concerning the principles of Islam. First, Muslims may coexist with the modern world societies and different religious groups, and be able to practice Islam safely and freely. Second, Muslims may carry on reforming the principles of Islam so it can fit in with the modern global ideologies, especially western ones. These reformulations created a newer distorted version of Islam that serves the westerners schema, which was already predicted centuries ago in a Hadith by the Prophet Mohammed (Peace and blessings be upon him) reported by Anas ibn Malik: “A time of patience will come to people in which adhering to one’s religion is like grasping a hot coal.” Finally, Muslims may stand against modernity in general and the flow of ideas of all types coming from the west. Their rejection of western knowledge may result in anti-science mindset and tardiness. Therefore, there will be an everlasting aversion between the non-Muslims and Muslims. In the logic of “to be or not to be,” Al-Jabri added that if the Islamic civilization fails to follow the Averroist rationalist path, then it will definitely face the bleak future of a return of its age of darkness. This was predicted in the Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah Mohammed (may peace be upon him) said: Islam initiated as something strange, and it would revert to its (old position) of being strange. so good tidings for the strangers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, since this chapter is devoted to the empirical study of our research, which attempts to prove that whether Islamophobia is a mere made-up racism or not, the analysis of the questionnaire shows that Islamophobia is considered a new form of racism around the world. This can be clearly seen in the analysis of some elements in the questionnaire. It also shows that Media plays a major role in spreading Islamophobia and shaping the New Islam which confirms our

aforementioned hypothesis. Finally, this chapter concludes with several possible futures scenarios about Islam in the world.

General Conclusion

The idea of this research was born from the observations of the ongoing and increasing hate related events towards Muslims around the world. This led to pursue this investigation about the original and true source(s) of these incidents. Since it is next to impossible to achieve this global aim at once, it was divided to four sub aims. First, we explored the historical evolvement of the subject matter; Islamophobia. Second, we investigated whether the term 'phobia' properly describes the phenomenon. Here we found out that there is discrepancy between what the term phobia really means and what it actually taken place in reality. Third, the gab intentionally created between the two terms phobia and racism is believed to be in favour of an agenda working against Islam so as to conceal the true intensions it serves. Finally, the chief intension is believed to be bring down Islam following numbers of planned step to be executed throughout a period of time starting few decades ago and going on few more in the future. However, the eradication of Islam is not the only possible scenario that may happen. We, as well as many other researchers in this topic, predict two other ones to happen; it is either going to thrive and dominate or go through major reforms so as to exist with western/modern societies.

In the process of conducting this research we had a number of questions to answer so as to help find the truth and gradually achieve the major/minor objective(s) of this research paper which are: (a) What are the roots of Islamophobia? (b) How did Islamophobia evolve throughout time? (c) What is the role of media in spreading Islamophobia? (d) How Muslims are treated in the West positively and negatively? Asking the questions just mentioned yielded the following hypothesis that says Islamophobia is a made-up racism meant to Orientalize and self-Orientalize Muslims, and that media has the strongest role in spreading Islamophobia and shaping the new Islam.

In order to check the validity of this hypothesis, a questionnaire was conducted with a sample of 12 new Muslim individuals who are from and live in different western countries. These persons

were asked a set of 12 questions in relation to the core and offshoots of the research in hand. Their answers were of great value to this research as they helped attain some very important results.

Based on the investigation carried out in the theoretical part of this dissertation and the answers obtained from respondents of the questionnaire, it can be said that this research paper achieves its aims; answers its questions; and confirms its hypothesis. First, the historical investigation as well as answers of the questionnaire say that Islamophobia is a false term to call the hatred and aggression against Muslims since it is merely one form of racism practiced on them particularly apart from all the other religious groups in the west/world. Second, both observations and results show that western media played/plays a significant role in creating and spreading hate against Muslims around the world via all its tools. Third, scholars, researchers, and questionnaire respondents agree on three scenarios of what may happen to Islam and Islamophobia in the upcoming years/decades; it may flourish, vanish, or hardly co-exist.

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Appendix

Western New Muslim's Questionnaire

Part One: General Questions

1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?
2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?
3. Was it easy to take this decision?
4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?
5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?
6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?
7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?
8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?
10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?
11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?
12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?

Answers of Respondent 1

Part One: General Questions

1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?

So, I was introduced to Islam, when I was in Turkey. That was my first proper introduction, I guess. And that was a very positive one for me, I mean, I had been with Muslims before I knew some Muslims but I'd never really thought about Islam, or even thought about reading the Quran or anything until I went to Turkey and I met people in Turkey, and that's when I really got interested.

2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?

So, I took my Shahada. Last year, in March, and I did it by myself. I did it after I'd finished reading the Quran, and I did it after I'd learned how to pray, so I'd already been praying for a couple of weeks before I took my Shahada.

3. Was it easy to take this decision?

The decision was easy because I did a lot of research before so I wore hijab, I prayed I acted like a Muslim, I finished reading the Quran, weeks before I declared my Shahada. So, when I actually did the shahada, it wasn't hard.

4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?

Now, my idea about Islam before I became Muslim was, I guess, like a lot of people in the UK, terrorism, hating non-Muslims. All these thoughts I had, I guess from the media, really, really bad things I remember even being a kid and liking on Facebook, there was like a ban the burqa in UK and I remember liking it and saying like ban the burqa, we don't know who's behind it. So, I've

astagferullah, so yeah my. I was very blinded by what I guess I've been told, and I didn't know any different.

5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?

My life would change a lot, because I started looking towards different things for goodness, I started finding different morals I started just measuring my success in different ways so my life definitely changed a lot, and I become more interested in learning I become kinder, I just become more relaxed. Less argumentative, lots of positive things

6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?

My social circle, I mean the Accepting of my decision. They didn't really, I mean I got a few messages on Facebook here and there, from people who I didn't really know but kind of new saying like, why would you become Muslim, they're all terrorists and yeah so it wasn't good, it took my mom a while to get used to it as well. Now it's not an issue, my mum accepts it she knows that I praise. She will even if I'm praying, she won't interrupt me she's really respectful.

7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?

I mean not really it hasn't. I mean, it hasn't really made a difference. I guess people will look at you differently but that's a good thing. People will look at you less. I find that that's a good thing as well.

8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.

I don't really find any challenges to be honest, even I started traveling a lot Alhamdulillah with my husband. We've been to really hot countries and I'm fine I don't get hot in the. We've been the cold countries and that's fine as well, but it doesn't really make much of a difference you don't really notice you're wearing it after a while. Yeah, I don't think people have really treated me that differently Alhamdulillah.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?

I think Islamophobia exists. I think it was bred in the media, and I think it just comes from people that just aren't educated about Islam, just, they think Muslims are this kind of foreign alien entity that is trying to invade and kill and they get protective and they get nervous and they start lashing out and that's kind of that's pretty much the problem. It definitely exists here, I noticed it more in other countries, like for example when we were in Romania, we were facing a lot of racism. We're in Greece we were facing a lot of racism, but in the UK, I really don't think it's that bad, just because there are a lot of Muslims here but there are still situations where things do happen.

10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?

Yeah, definitely people would have bad eyelid at a Christian if you said you're Christian they wouldn't start telling you that your faith is wrong and all these kinds of things so yeah, it's treated differently, definitely. If I become a Christian, I wouldn't, I definitely wouldn't have been treated the same way where people were what I'm being treated for becoming Muslim so yeah, it's very different.

11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?

I think it's. Do I think it's all phobias created a few by the media. So, I think it's a couple of things. I think the media has a big part to play. But at the end of the day, the media are also reporting on things that are happening, which are actually happening which are true. So, it's also people's responsibility to be like okay there's this terrorist group, but just because you know they're Muslim doesn't mean my neighbors are also terrorists, you know, it's, it's, it's people's responsibility at the end of the day. I, personally, I've never seen on the news, something that says all Muslims are terrorists,

has never happened, but it's something that happened myself through not knowing many Muslims are thinking that's what they are. So, media fuels it but at the end of the day is up to the people to educate themselves. And it's up to Muslims to also try and infiltrate and reach areas where there aren't many Muslims, they can kind of show. So, it's up to the media in a couple of ways. The media is should do better with their reporting and should also make an effort to report the other side, people who are killing Muslims because they're Muslim, that kind of terrorism as well they should do an effort to report both equally, but also, they should also have an effort to include more Muslims in their shows so TV shows, movies, news reporters whoever it is, there should be more Muslims that to show that you know there are good Muslims so the media does have a role to play.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?

I honestly think that things are getting better. I don't think things are getting worse, I think. I think the West, they're embracing diversity they're embracing lots of different types of people and I think there is a happy future I think slowly the older generations that are scared of these materials and stuff, they're slowly dying out the kids don't really mind because they're used to mixing with different types of people and I think it's gonna get better, I really do. Inshallah.

Answers of Respondent 2

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** My Turkish friend in school.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** I said the Shahada together with my friend in school.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** Yes, because I felt it was the right thing to do.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** I was only 16 years old when I became a Muslima, so I didn't know much about Islam before. I just thought it was a complete different religion like Hinduism. But it has a lot in common with Christians.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** I lost some friends when I started wearing the hijab. But at the same time I knew who were my true friends.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** My parents thought it is just a phase and it is going over soon.
- 7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** Before I became a Muslima I was just a normal girl. But when I started wearing the hijab, people started looking at me and even say mean things.
- 8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.**
Yes, every time I go out, people are looking at me and sometimes say stupid things to me.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

- 9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?** Yes I think so.

- 10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?** Yes, a lot of people hate Islam and Muslims. So they treat us bad.
- 11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?** Yes.
- 12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?** I think Islam is becoming a part of the west. Some like it, some hate it.

Answers of Respondent 3

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** Muslim Brothers and sisters in an English learning platform approached me and I get to know the existence of that “Arab culture” I thought in that moment :)
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** A Muslim helped me by a video call.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** It took me like one week to read and think about it. As much as I learn Islam it become clearer and clearer that Islam is definitely the truth! I make a very detailed description of my pathway to Islam in my this video in YouTube: https://youtu.be/h_0F-A_OY4
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** Before Islam I was very ignorant about Islam, just zero! Now I devote my life to da’wa ❤️ Islam is my life Alhamdulillah.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** My life changed 100% till the deepest level from inside to every aspect of my life. I love Allah and that love is the center around where I rotate and all my life is devoted to do as much as I can in Islam, that much is very less, but I keep trying.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** BAD! Lol I lost all my friends, and some family stopped talking to me. But after time they get used to it and the family gets ok. Friends get lost forever and for goodness.
- 7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** I got very bad bad Islamophobia from people around me, specifically my neighbours started an open war against me, the harassment got too much, they even beat me up on the street, in the end I

changed my location and after time I left the country. It was horrible! I detail that story in my this video: <https://youtu.be/zLY2fpT4RC8>

8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate. It

was before, when I was in Mexico it was calling so much bad attention to myself, but So Too Much! Now I am in Canada and here there are many Muslim women so is very normal and that is comfortable.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists more clearly in the western societies? Islamophobia is a

culture in the west for the last 20 years, no doubt about it. May Allah protect us. Not in Canada though, there's some rotten apples but generally speaking people are kind and tolerant.

10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated

differently? How? Islamophobia is being injected into people's daily lives in movies, tv shows, social media etc. There's government Islamophobia and is so clear, open, transparent and accepted that is very hard to point out. Is like showing the sunlight and people just take it for granted, it is just a part of being western.

11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by the media? Absolutely! But it

is also very supported by governments in some western countries, not all but many. You can see how they openly support the killing and oppression of Muslims in Palestine or in Kashmir, or when persecuted in broad India without condemning or even opening their mouth against the killing of children! No humanity being shown... Such a shame and saddening truth.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west? Islam will keep growing!

Muslims are more actively participating in the Media in a positive way to show our humanity and the beauty of our religion. Insha'Allah we will be more and more and one day just normalize the

relation between ones and the others without any bitterness. One day Insha'Allah and if we don't see it in this life, we Muslims hope for the mercy of our Creator in this life and the next.

Answers of Respondent 4

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** My sister met my brother-in-law (Muslim) when I was 11 yrs old..and had Muslim classmates in high school.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** I took my shahada 2nd October 2000 with a dear friend and the sheikh.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** No and yes. I did some reading and had met a man I wanted to marry. So I wanted to be with him and I knew quite a lot from my sister who had already converted in 1990.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** Because I grew up with Muslims around me from the age of 11 , I knew the basics and had to qualms about it. Now, Alhamdulillah's, love being a Muslim and constantly learning every day.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** Positive.. no drinking, no haram ... didn't want a husband that drank alcohol or gambled like my father.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** Has a small circle of friends. closest friend was Muslim (still friends) and the rest stopped talking to me when I met the man I wanted to marry because he was Muslim 🙏
- 7. How were your treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** No difference until I put hijab on. I put hijab on in 2014.... work colleagues were ok, some customers were quite prejudice and three comments... but I didn't care. I was happy with my decision.

8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate. Not really. Blessed so live in a Muslim majority part of Sydney Australia. Only had some issues at work. But they got over it

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies? 100%

10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How? Yes. Anything negative is amplified for Muslims and anything positive is (if anything) a small story which has no media attention.

11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fuelled by media? Yes, 100%. The words they use have a negative connotation no matter what the story is.. look at the current situation in Palestine.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west? Don't think anything will hang in the near future because the powers that control the media are all anti-Muslim Zionists

Answers of Respondent 5

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** My sister's husband, he's from Egypt.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** 2010, my sister, her husband and my ex-husband.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** Yes Alhamdulillah, Islam is the true religion.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** I found it strange the way people dressed but now I know why and I understand it.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** I had to stop eating bacon but Alhamdulillah's I found out that's a positive.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** Most of my family were ok with it and my friends too.
- 7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** Nothing really changed.
- 8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.**
I've faced some racist remarks, ppl called me paki etc.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

- 9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?** Some people believe what the media tells them so it can cause hatred.
- 10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?** Not really no.
- 11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?** Definitely yes that's the main reason people are negative towards Islam.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west? Many people do proper research after the media portrays a bad image and find out that what the media reports isn't the truth and they embrace Islam, i see many new reverts being born 🌸

Answers of Respondent 6

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** The first time I probably heard about it sort of just being on the news. I know that I had kind of quite Western views, I'd say, of it being this Middle Eastern religion. So, that was when I first was kind of introduced to it, I suppose by the media. But then it will have been like properly introduced with people will have been when I was around.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** I took my Shahada. In October, 2020, and it was in my room on my own.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** It wasn't easy at all until about, a day before I ended up saying it. It was difficult leading up to it because I had to do a lot of research into it first before feeling like I could say I was Muslim. Just because I feel like being within this culture and not having a Muslim family then you have to be 10 times more sure. So, yeah, different origins, aren't accepted as readily as, you know, people that are white British and yeah just thought that it was very mixed in with a lot of like culture that, Obviously that brings a lot of like racism and everything. And I thought it was almost not as civilized as Christianity, because that's where I draw a lot of my comparisons from, because of how I grew up.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** My view on it now, is that it's a religion that encompasses, you know, all the other religions, it's, you know, it preaches peace it preaches you, it tells you to be patient and kind with people, and it's just, I think it's one of, well it just is the the best way to live your life. I think that. the media played a really heavy role in making the religion out to see like, violent, and so different and there are so many things that when you actually educate yourself on the religion, it does just yeah, it's, it's the upgrade from the religions that have come before.

5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)? I've made changes in my lifestyle and diet choices. And I feel like that's made me almost more fun at gatherings because I'm more present in the moment I'm not using anything to like enhance my mood, and a lot more self-assured, because through accepting the religion I forcing myself to stick out because of my beliefs, whereas easier just to follow through so I'm a lot surer of myself, I'm a lot less self-conscious about my views, and also a lot less self-conscious when I go out with what I'm wearing, I've noticed that I just feel safer. I don't feel worried when I walk past men, because there's nothing to look at with the clothes that I'm wearing. I feel like I'm much more worldly aware and aware about, particularly with what's happening with like Palestine, there are things in history and geography that we just do not get taught, and it's made me look into Middle Eastern history and geography, and it seems crazy to me that we weren't taught about that beforehand, just from a basic way, we only have one planet to live on, so why aren't we learning about all different countries. And I think that's, that's helped me in my everyday life, just with being able to relate to people and seeing that people are people and it doesn't matter where you live. There's still a soul there that has likes and dislikes and it shouldn't matter where you're from, and you shouldn't have more rights for somebody based on the country that you're in. I thought I make enough to talk to my family more and make an effort to forgive people more. Yeah, I'm just trying to live like as respectfully as possible whilst also obviously abiding by religion so I think he's really helped me in terms of setting personal boundaries with people, and how much they're allowed to change my decisions and how I act. I genuinely can't think of any negatives for it. The only, the only way you say it has negatively impacted me would maybe be unworried about jobs, and whether I will be at a disadvantage, getting jobs with a headscarf on versus not or a disadvantage getting jobs being Muslim versus not saying anything. But that isn't something that has happened. I have had people shout, things like Paki, and go back to your own country, at me out their cars, which is. Yeah, but

that's the only like negative thing. I feel like as women with, we're always subject to men shouting out of cars.

6. How did your social circle respond to your decision? Initially they were okay they weren't that surprised because of all the looking into I've been doing. However, as time goes on, things like me, not drinking alcohol, or me not wanting to wear shorts or me, not wanting to have boys on my Instagram. These have been things that have really affected people in a way that they think that I'm being brainwashed. They kind of attack the decisions of, and I need to do a lot of explaining about why I'm making changes to these aspects of my life. However, at the same time. If I talk too much. Say I'm explained to them in detail everything I've read in order to explain to them why, or like how I'm getting to make a decision, say for example, not wearing shorts anymore. I find that they then almost shut off and seem to not want to listen, that if I don't explain it, then I get attacked for the decision. So sometimes it can be good and fine. It doesn't really matter. But I think as soon as they see me doing something that they perceive other people will perceive as weird or out of the norm of the culture that we're in. I think that's when it starts to affect them. And obviously I've gone through that journey of being more sure of myself and being okay with sticking out. But through that, I think my friends see me sticking out as making them stick out also. They haven't gone to the point where they're okay with that. Also, I'm going to say lost a few friends but a lot of friendships have been left to slide aren't really there anymore because of the decisions I've made and changes I've made. Yes, but also just the idea that there is a change that I think has affected a lot of people, where I would only go around and see them for coffee anyway and we would chat just the idea that I am Muslim I think scares a lot of people. So even if what we did wouldn't change at all, or like how we were in the friendship. Just the idea that I am Muslim now has caused them to, to want to take a step back.

7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now? I was treated well, I have a lot of friends, my family were super normal with me. I would have regular conversations, how I'm treated now. I can either be a risk. I think I get knocked out a lot, a lot more, I think what I do what I say, how I dress is a much larger focus, having told people that I'm Muslim. I think if I hadn't said that I am Muslim. And I made these changes. I don't think anybody would have said anything, but I think adding the word Muslim in changes how people react to that so I think it makes their reactions a lot more dramatic so I've had a lot more difficult conversations I've had to justify myself, more so than I ever have in the past about any decisions that I've made, saying that how I'm treated now by the Muslim community. I am treated so well. Everybody is so welcoming. People are always sending gifts. People are always there to help. I have so many people to call and speak to. I yeah, I feel like the Muslim community, with me being Muslim. Just accept me as their own.

Answers of Respondent 7

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** School first introduced me to Islam by teaching us about all religions. Especially Islam kept in my mind.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** In the year 2007 with some of the sisters who I got to know.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** After getting to know this religion – yes.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** Actually, I only knew Islam from school and what television told me about it. So I had an idea of a little bit negative religion. But when I learned about Islam, I learned that there is much misinformation about Islam. Nowadays Islam is for me the perfect and peaceful way of life – a guideline from our creator.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** In the first time I had some problems with my mother and brother. Now they accept my decision.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** In general, they accepted my decision and I had no problems in school.
- 7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** My friends and family treated me like before embracing Islam. People I don't know treated me worse (saying bad words, spitting, pushing...)
- 8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.** I had some problems by finding a job or an apartment and also I had to leave a school because they treated me bad. But I accepted this and found other ways to reach my goals.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

- 9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?** Yes! Even in my family there are members who demonstrate (before corona) every week against Muslims. You can feel it nearly every day. People look at you, people say bad words, you get no job/apartment because of your appearance.
- 10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?** I think the attitude against Muslims is worse than to other religions. Therefore, they are treated differently.
- 11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?** Partly yes.
- 12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?** Unfortunately, I think it will become more and more difficult for Islam and Muslims.

Answers of Respondent 8

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** Myself. I had my first contact with Islam when I came to Egypt and made friends with my current brother-in-law. So as not to step into any faux pas and not to hurt him or something like that. I started to read and think about Islam. I then dealt even more intensively with Islam after I met my husband.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** I spoke the Shahada in June 2018 in an Arab mosque in Berlin. I was in Berlin with my Turkish friend, she was my companion. In addition to the 2 male witnesses.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** No, it was not a "simple" decision, but after careful consideration. The decision to convert shouldn't be taken lightly or because the partner wants to.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** Before I dealt with Islam, I always thought that women were being oppressed. The men are allowed to do anything and the women have to sit at home. Then I always thought they would be forced to wear a headscarf. The media has always suggested that religion is very violent because the man is also allowed to hit the woman. In the meantime I have noticed, also through my own experience, that my picture was totally wrong. The women are not forced (there are of course exceptions). Also, not every man beats his wife. Islam is more of a religion of charity and peace. I find it very difficult to describe. I have learned for myself to be even more satisfied with what Allah has given me. We have often forgotten how to be grateful for everything we get. For example, I put on the headscarf by myself. In the beginning I didn't wear it in the village. After a while I got the feeling that I really want to. And since then, I've also felt more comfortable. In Germany I don't wear a headscarf because I'm afraid of being assaulted. For my senses and my feelings, my religion leaves this decision to me.

- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** A very nice question. I feel positively about my new attitude towards the subject of gratitude for the things that you get from Allah. It is often the case that I ask for something and this wish is granted to me. I haven't had this experience before. Who could / should I have asked? I was baptized but never believed. I now think a lot more about the well-being of other people and try to help whenever I can. I often feel that if I need help with a decision and I ask Allah for help or an answer, it will be given to me. So far there has not been a decision that I have made with the help of Allah that I have repented. Through my religion, I have also met a lot of new, nice and nice people. Found new friends. It was / is negative that some friends turned away from me because of this. The question that you have to or should ask yourself is whether they were really friends.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** Differently. There are friends who were very open about my decision. But there were also friends who reject my decision and turned away from me. But the fact for me is that I haven't become a different person (outwardly). If it is important to a friend which religion belongs and or to people around me it is important which religion, I belong to in order to decide whether we can be friends, then this is not a real friendship.
- 7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** Since people have turned away from me for whom it is important or not acceptable that I am a Muslim, I can say that it does not matter to my other friends and that I am treated normally as always.
- 8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.** I can only answer the question if we assume that I live in Egypt because I don't wear a headscarf in Germany. In Egypt I am one woman of many. In Germany I don't wear the headscarf out of fear of attacks / insults / hostility from stupid people.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

- 9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?** No, I think this phobia is far bigger and more pronounced in the new federal states. In my opinion, however, this phobia is a point of the lack of education or the lack of interest in dealing with Islam and reading about it and the negative reporting by the press.
- 10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?** I cannot say.
- 11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?** Yes, to a certain extent. What is being reported in the media? IS did this, IS did that. Terror fighters have been trained again in Syria. I actually never read / hear anything positive about Islam from the media.
- 12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?** I hope and wish for a better acceptance of Islam in Germany in the future. So that we women in Germany / in the West can wear the headscarf without fear.

Answers of Respondent 9

Part One: General Questions

1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam? I was 16 years old. The azaan on Canal Algerie, it felt familiar to me, as if I'd known it forever, a very nice familiar feeling. The German Dawa at that time from Abu Hamza and Abu Nagi.

2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people? I pronounced the Shahada with the niya to convert when I was 18 years old after planning it for 2 years.

3. Was it easy to take this decision? It wasn't easy. I fought with myself and shaytan for two years. I wanted to do everything right after my conversion, for example. Wearing the hijab straight away and I knew I wasn't ready at that point. But at some point came the point where the fear was too great to die without a Shahada. So that I would rather be a Muslim without a hijab than not a Muslim.

4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now? My impression of Islam has always been positive and I have always felt drawn to Islam and consciously sought contact with Muslim girls. Of course, I would have noticed in the family and in the media back then that attempts were made to make Islam bad, but I never took that seriously.

5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)? For the most part, my life has been positively changed. I felt like I could do something for God as he does everything for me and I finally had facts and sources to research for all of my questions. The relationship with my parents has also improved a lot as one of the parents' point of view in Islam became clear and the importance of the da'wa. Of course, there were also things that you couldn't do anymore, like going swimming, but I did not care, and those were just small compromises that I was happy to make.

6. How did your social circle respond to your decision? My best friends knew right away. The Muslims were very happy. The non-Muslims thought it was good and respected it. I was afraid to tell my family and only after a year did the "outing" to my astonishment, but they reacted very calmly and said that they had already suspected it.

7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now? You can tell the difference very much. Especially when I think of the two years as a Muslim without a hijab in which I was more or less "undercover" because nobody from the outside knew that I was a German Muslim. I was treated quite normally and worked in retail, but where I took away the Islamophobia of customers towards Muslim people. When I started wearing the hijab it was just like being a second-class person. Not only that one is automatically mistaken for a foreigner, it is also often assumed that one does not speak the German language and generally has a low IQ.

8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate. Covering yourself in today's Europe requires a lot of courage or a strong Iman. I have seen sisters come and go who had problems wearing the hijab in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They took it off and on again and again. They had a lot of ups and downs and in the end, they gave up. You have to strengthen yourself psychologically so that you can deal with insults and possibly even physical attacks and threats. You have to be confident enough that you don't care what other people think.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies? Islamophobia is a major problem in the West, especially in Central Europe. 90% of the blame are the media, which tell a lot of lies and are sometimes already brainwashing people, and 10% are the negative behavior of Muslims in Europe.

10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How? Muslims are clearly treated as second class people in Europe and attempts are being made to deliberately restrict their rights. While Buddhists, Hindus and Jews have no problem practicing their religion and there are hardly any attacks on their religious institutions, practicing Muslims are always accused of Salafism and try to prevent religiosity by calling modern and non-compromising Muslims the "true Muslims" would like to pose and practicing as a threat.

11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media? Yes, hatred of Islam and fear of Islam are deliberately fueled by the media. Partly by aggressively taking a part from the Qur'an and pointing out how bad Islam is supposed to be. Often things are invented that are not right at all or they are deliberately twisted in order to damage Islam. Or even very insidiously, for example by deliberately emphasizing that the perpetrator is a Muslim or comes from a Muslim country. What one never does with other believers. In addition, there are deliberately online sites that only document the attacks by alleged "Muslims" and prove to people that all Muslims are criminals.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west? I would like the situation for Muslims in Germany and Europe as well as in other western countries to get better. That you have the same rights as people of different faiths. That as a German Muslim you can live just as safely and carefree in your own country as a German Christian. I wish that from the bottom of my heart. But at the moment I only see that the quality of life is not good. As a Muslim, I neither feel safe in my own country, nor do I feel accepted. I notice more and more that many siblings are forced to abandon their religious side in order to please society and thereby get more security and rights.

Answers of Respondent 10

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** Travelling introduced me to Islam. I remember first hearing the call to prayer in Bosnia and then Turkey and then in many countries after that on my travels as well as seeing mosques and Muslims around me.
- 2. When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** In August 2020. I went to the mosque with a friend who I had connected with on Instagram a few months before as she had recently reverted and at that mosque too so we went together.
- 3. Was it easy to take this decision?** By the time I did my shahada it was a fairly easy decision as I had been thinking about it for so long already and I was very sure that I wanted to after all the learning I had been doing.
- 4. What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** I really didn't know much about Islam before I started learning and a lot of the things I thought I knew were from negative media or from cultural representation rather than the religion and I can see that now.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** I have had to change the way I dress which I am doing slowly and I no longer socialise with friends in a way that I used to however I see these as a progression of my life and as a positive rather than a negative even though they can be hard things to deal with sometimes. From another positive side I feel like I have more purpose and direction in my future.
- 6. How did your social circle respond to your decision?** My friends were happy for me with my decision. Most of my friends have travelled a lot and are very open minded and they know I wouldn't have made the decision lightly so they were, and are, supportive.

7. How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now? As of yet I haven't noticed a major difference in real life. Online I definitely feel like I have more connection with people (aka Muslims) and more of a community which is nice!

8. Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.

I do not wear the hijab full time and at the moment I don't wear it more than I wear it so I cannot comment, but when I have worn it, I have not had any issues with people around me and I don't feel like I have been treated any differently so far or had any challenges (apart from learning how to keep it secure and on!).

Part Two: Research-related Questions

9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies? Yes, absolutely. There is so often so much negative media surrounding Islam and I think many western societies only know negative things about Islam and that creates tension within countries and communities and results in Islamophobia.

10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How? Yes, I think they are targeted much more for negative events that happen and are not understood as much.

11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fuelled by media? I think it mainly is but I also think that the misunderstanding of Islam is caused from some Muslims misrepresenting Islam and Muslims, and other countries misrepresenting Islam. For example, a lot of people think women cannot drive in Saudi because of Islam or because they have heard women can't drive in Saudi, they think all Muslims think this way. Although these inaccurate negative thoughts might not start Islamophobia to the degree it is today, they don't help when they media portray Islam negatively on top of these inaccurate thoughts.

12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west? I see it as positive. I think social media helps bring us together and teaches us more about each other. I see more and more people reverting to Islam from the west which in turns shows more families and friends about Islam and the truth of the religion, and I think that one day the media might move onto something else to focus negatively on! Inshallah!

Answers of Respondent 11

Part One: General Questions

- 1. Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** I heard about Islam in childhood (Ramadan, Koran, you are not allowed to eat pork, Muslim burial, etc.). Many Muslim families lived in the village where I was born and raised.
- 2. When did you take your shahada and was it alone or with other close people?** In October 2010. I made my decision on my own. Before I converted to Islam, I read, heard, and asked a lot about Islam (read the Koran, visited the mosque, heard the Sheikh speak, attended Muslim festivals).
- 3. Was it easy to make that decision?** On one hand it was very easy because I come from a believing family (Christianity). Religion and belief in God have always been very important to me. On the other hand, it was a bit difficult because my family are Christians.
- 4. What was your conception of Islam before you embraced it? How about now?** The ideas about Islam before I converted and now have stayed the same.
- 5. How has your decision affected different aspects of your life?** Not much has changed. I can only say that it is generally positive.
- 6. How did your social circle react to your decision?** Many did not understand why I converted because they only heard negative about Islam. Many do not yet know about it. To be honest: I don't have to tell everyone. This is my choice in my life!
- 7. How were you treated before you embraced Islam and how are you treated now?** I did not fully understand this question. Do you mean treated in the family? In the circle of friends? So far I have been treated and I hope I will be treated normally. You don't see from the outside that I'm a Muslim. It probably depends on it, since I don't wear a headscarf and dress normally with respect for myself and Islam. (I already dress my body properly, but I don't wear gelabija or abaya. I don't find these clothes practical in everyday life and at work). I have heard many times in my life that

the women who converted to Islam and who wear the headscarves were cursed or insulted on the street.

8. Is it a challenge for you in everyday life to be a veiled woman? As I mentioned above, I don't wear a headscarf. But I already have great respect for the sisters who wear the headscarf. If at some point I will wear the headscarf, it will not be a challenge or specialty for me. My opinion is: a woman with or without a headscarf always remains a woman (wife, mother, sister, friend). The role of women in society with or without a headscarf also remains unchanged.

9. Do you think Islamophobia is more evident in Western societies? I don't know

10. Compared to other religious groups in the West, do you see that Muslims are treated differently? How? I can't answer

11. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the West? I think Islam and Muslims have a future in Europe, if

A. The religion is properly taught in the family. Nowadays the religion has to be properly taught to the children in Muslim families. Unfortunately, I have seen or heard so often that many children who come from Muslim families have no idea about Islam. They don't fast in Ramadan, they don't pray, they don't go to the mosque. Unfortunately, one often sees younger women from Muslim families walking on the street with full make-up, wearing very figure-hugging clothes, smoking, going to the disco and not praying at all. If you ask why it is so, you get the simplest answer: "They were born in Europe". It has nothing to do with Europe. I see big problems here in the family and in upbringing.

B. Muslims in other religions are also more respected.

C. If the Muslims correctly explain to the Europeans themselves about their religion or teach them correctly about their religion. There are many situations that Europeans simply do not know about Islam or do not mean angry at all (gifts at Christmas, donating blood, no baptism in Islam,

eating halal, etc.). It is also important to note what is religion and what is tradition in Islam or in the family !!!! As a Muslim you have to be very patient and teach things about religion in a very friendly manner (e.g. we are not allowed to do it, or in Islam it is not allowed or not suitable).

Answers of Respondent 12

A. Part One: General Questions

1. **Who or what first introduced you to Islam?** I started looking into Islam because of my friend who is Muslim, and how welcoming and kind their family was.
2. **When did you take your Shahada and was it by yourself or with other close people?** Took my shahada in September 2018 at a converts center with my now in laws and husband.
3. **Was it easy to take this decision?** In a way it was because I knew Islam was the truth, it was more so scary to start a new life in a way, and face all the challenges I knew were ahead.
4. **What was your idea about Islam before embracing it? How about now?** I didn't really think much about Islam before I started researching it. I didn't bother with what the media said.
5. **How has your decision affected different aspects of your life (positively and negatively)?** I've grown a lot as a person as I've been through different hardships, but because I'm Muslim now and I trust Allah's plan, I deal with the difficult times way better than before.
6. **How did your social circle respond to your decision?** I didn't announce anything in public, I just told my closest friend and family, and the rest found out through social media once I shared more Islamic stuff or started wearing the hijab 1 year later.
7. **How were you treated before embracing Islam and how are you being treated now?** I was treated with white privilege, growing up in a safe country. But now, even though I definitely still "benefit" from being white, I can get hate for especially being a revert.
8. **Is being a veiled woman causing any challenges for you in everyday life? Please illustrate.**
Yes, definitely. It is a big struggle for me to wear hijab, and at some times I can feel unsafe or insecure because people stare. Alhamdulillah I've never experienced any form of harassment in real life, only people staring, pointing and talking about me, but I know it's gonna happen one day.

Im bound to end up on the same bus or stand in the same shopping line as the mad racist guy who won't have an issue telling me how he feels.

Part Two: Research-related Questions

- 9. Do you think Islamophobia exists clearer in the western societies?** It's definitely does, but I also think social media blows it up. Yes, we have many racist Muslim hating people, but they're not as many, or more than the ones who accept us.
- 10. Compared to other religious groups in the west, do you see that the Muslims are treated differently? How?** Perhaps in the later years Muslims have been targeted way more, especially after 9/11 and the seemingly increase in "Islamic terrorism". But it's difficult to say what other religious groups experience in comparison. Today I feel the extreme left is hurting us just as much. Today it seems that believing in a religion, whether it's Christianity or Islam, is just crazy talk.
- 11. Do you believe that Islamophobia is created and fueled by media?** Definitely, definitely fueled. Money rules.
- 12. What future do you see for Islam and Muslims in the west?** Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "A time of patience will come to people in which adhering to one's religion is like grasping a hot coal."

ملخص

تناقش هذه الأطروحة موضوع الإسلاموفوبيا (رهاب الإسلام) في العالم الغربي. وتتناول بشكل أساسي تطوره وعلاقته بالاستشراق، وكيف تطور ليصبح عنفًا ضد المسلمين. تتمثل الأهداف الرئيسية لهذا البحث في تتبع جذور الإسلاموفوبيا والتحقق مما إذا كانت هذه الجذور تنبع من العنصرية البحتة أم لا. كما تتنبأ بمستقبل هذه الظاهرة وكذلك مستقبل الإسلام في العالم. ويقوم هذا العمل بلفت الانتباه إلى موضوع الإسلاموفوبيا وفتح أبواب المناقشة والمزيد من البحث في هذه القضية. تنتمي هذه الورقة البحثية إلى المنهج الوصفي التحليلي للبحث حيث تم التحقق من صحة فرضيته باستخدام استبيان تم إرساله إلى مجموعة من المسلمين الجدد الذين يعيشون في الغرب. وتظهر نتائج ومعالجة بيانات البحث صحة الفرضية وتؤكد فعلياً أن الإسلاموفوبيا هي في الواقع عنصرية مختلقة؛ كون المرء مسلماً يتسبب في أن يعامل بشكل سلبي ومختلف عن باقي المجموعات الدينية في الغرب؛ كما أن الإعلام مسؤول عن خلق وتأجيج هذه الظاهرة في جميع أنحاء العالم.