

Islamophobia on Social Media: The Struggles and Strengthening of Female Muslim Converts'

Religious Identity

Word Count: 5092

Introduction

Constantly scrolling, seeing comments, and posting, social media is more than just a platform for sharing opinions; it shapes identities. But for Muslim women, the digital world is not always a safe space for self-expression. Instead, the digital world is a battlefield where Islamophobia challenges, distorts, and at times, even reinforces religious identity. Islam, the fastest-growing religion in the world, is followed by 3.45 million Muslims in the United States. According to Pew Research Center, approximately 23% of American Muslims are converts (Mohamed, 2018). Yet, many of these converts face Islamophobic remarks not only from strangers, but also from their friends and family. Islamophobia – “irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam” (Merriam Webster, 2024) – creates significant barriers to self-expression and belonging both in digital and real-world spaces.

While the impact of Islamophobia has been studied extensively, research often overlooks its effects on Muslim Converts. For example, Areeza Ali’s 2017 study examined how Muslim Americans have become desensitized, numb, and insecure in response to Islamophobia. However, what this study and many others fail to take into account is how experiencing Islamophobia—particularly after converting to Islam and beginning their search for a sense of belonging—affects converts (Areeza 2017). Even less attention has been given to how female converts are impacted in online spaces, where Islamophobia is increasingly blatant and widespread. Previous research has established that intolerance from friends and family causes Muslim converts to struggle with their religious identities. In 2017, Rahami and Suleiman explored how conversion reshaped female converts' relationships with their friends and family before and after conversion. One key finding was the paradox between wearing the hijab—an

Islamic garment that covers the hair and neck, often worn by Muslim women—and how they were treated, versus how female converts perceived the hijab. While female converts viewed the hijab as a “Mirror of Identity”, they also faced a significant amount of discrimination, insults, and social disadvantages from wearing it (Rahami & Suleiman 2017). The hijab is just one example of how lifestyle changes following conversion cause female converts to feel isolated and lose relationships, further deepening their sense of loneliness.

This sense of isolation after conversion leads female converts to seek community online. However, in doing so, they frequently encounter hateful and blatantly Islamophobic content on social media, further complicating their struggle with their sense of religious identity. Online communities are meant to serve as spaces where converts, especially female converts, can seek guidance, support, and resources to strengthen their faith. Yet, with the increasing prevalence of discriminatory language and hostility towards Muslim converts, it becomes increasingly difficult for converts to find a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between social media use and female converts’ sense of belonging, as well as how the widespread presence of Islamophobia contributes to their struggles with religious identity. This research aims to bring awareness to a largely overlooked subgroup of Muslims who tend to struggle more with their religious identity due to discrimination on social media. While most studies focus on the experiences of Muslims born into the faith, it is essential to also explore the struggle converts face, who encounter distinct and often heightened obstacles in their religious journeys.

This study was conducted across multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, and Platform X. It utilized a survey composed of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to measure instances of Islamophobia, feelings of belonging, and religious

identity. Participants were recruited through links and descriptions posted on social media platforms (see Appendix A) to maximize reach within the given time frame and engage the largest possible number of female Muslim converts. The responses were analyzed qualitatively and were interpreted manually. Based on previous studies, it was hypothesized that more contact with Islamophobic content on social media correlates with a higher likelihood of female Muslim converts doubting their conversion and struggling with their religious identity.

Negative Portrayal of Muslims in American Media

The persistence of negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims has fueled the rise of Islamophobia in America. Western media often generalizes and assigns blame to Islam for the actions of individual Muslims, reinforcing harmful misconceptions. For many Americans, exposure to Muslims is limited to what they see in the media, where information is fed to them on screens or on paper. Studies have consistently shown that the media portrays Muslims overwhelmingly negatively. According to Pew Research Center (2021), an unbiased source conducting public opinion polling: 53% of people do not personally know a Muslim, and 52% reported knowing “not much” or “nothing at all” about Islam (Mohamed, 2021). The lack of personal familiarity allows media narratives to shape public perceptions, making negative stereotypes more prevalent. In agreement with the Pew Research Center, Bleich (2023), the director of the *Media Portrayals of Minority project*, developed a method to measure both negative and positive media representation of Muslims and Islam, analyzing 250,000 articles mentioning them. His findings revealed that articles mentioning Muslims or Islam in the United States were more negative than 84% of articles in the sample. Additionally, 80% of media coverage about Muslims was negative, compared to a balanced 50:50 ratio for Catholics, Jews, and Hindus. Both articles establish that negative media coverage of Muslims in the United States

is a prevalent and systematic issue. When over half of American adults lack basic knowledge about Islam and Muslims, media narratives play a crucial role in shaping opinion, which reinforces Islamophobia. Supporting Bleich's findings, Rehman and Hanley (2022) analyzed 180 studies across six research databases to examine how Islamophobia in the West affects the well-being of Muslim Minorities. Their findings aligned with previous research, emphasizing the difficulties Muslims face due to negative media portrayals. Rehman further expanded on Bleich's conclusions, discussing the "us vs. them" mentality and the construction of the "other" that comes from the negative media representation. Rehman concluded that the negative portrayal of Muslims in American Media has an adverse effect on Muslims' mental health and how they are perceived. The 'othering' of Muslims in the media continuously increases Islamophobia and online discrimination. Identifiable Muslims, by the way they dress, such as hijabs, thobes, and beards, are more likely to encounter negative stereotypes and interactions with others. Despite the vast ethnic, cultural, and ideological diversity among Muslims, American media tends to portray them as a monolithic group, strengthening the generalized misconceptions and discrimination.

Targeted Hate Speech on Social Media Platforms

As social media becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, hate speech has become a more prevalent issue. The United Nations (2024) defines hate speech based on three key characteristics: (1) it encompasses any form of expression, including images, cartoons, memes, gestures and symbols; (2) it is discriminatory, biased, or intolerant toward a person or group; and (3) it targets "identity factors" such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, or gender. Additionally, social media's anonymity feature causes people to feel less restrained and express opinions more frequently, whether those are beneficial or detrimental to others, this is

known as the online disinhibition effect (Suler 2004). There are two different types of disinhibition: toxic and benign. Benign disinhibition is where people share very personal information about themselves and reveal secrets, emotions, and other wants or needs. Toxic disinhibition is where people express harsh criticisms, anger, hatred, and explore darker places online than they would ever explore in the real world. The online disinhibition effect plays a significant role in fueling hate speech against Muslims on social media. Al-Rawi (2022) conducted a study analyzing both hashtagged and emojiified hate against Muslims on Social media, specifically Instagram and Twitter (now X) Using two separate python scripts, Al-Rawi collected approximately 18,000 social media posts referencing Islamophobic language, using the English language involving the use of the “F” word spanning over the course of 2013 to 2020. His findings revealed the five most used Islamophobic hashtags on X:

1. #f***Islam
2. #f***Muslims
3. #f***Allah
4. #religionofpeace
5. #Islamistheproblem

On Instagram, the most common hashtags used to demean Islam and Muslims included:

1. #f***Islam
2. #freedom
3. #2A
4. #America
5. #trump

The hashtag “f***islam” occurred almost 12,000 times on Instagram and a little over 1,000 times on X. These results demonstrate the widespread nature of anti-Muslim sentiment on social media, due to people’s comfort with not being held responsible for their words and actions. Given the prevalence of hashtagged hate on both Instagram and X, it is reasonable to assume other social media platforms also allow phrases such as the ones discussed above to be expressed. The main limitation to Al-Rawi’s study is that the research only focused on the English language, and other languages were not accounted for in the discrimination in hashtagged speech on social media platforms. As a result of the online disinhibition effect and the widespread presence of Islamophobic rhetoric on social media, Muslim converts struggle to express themselves and feel negative shifts in the way people treat them because of their conversions. This is particularly true for female converts who begin wearing the hijab, becoming an easy target for others as they become visible targets for discrimination. Their religious identity, once a personal matter, becomes a focal point of scrutiny, hostility, and exclusion, especially in digital spaces where hate speech thrives unchecked.

Counter Argument

Some may argue that Islamophobic remarks fall under a form of freedom of speech and that people are just being “too soft” for jokes or opinions. While there are instances where individuals may take offense to differing viewpoints, this argument is often used as a shield for being offensive and discriminatory under the guise of free speech. The legal framework for free speech in the U.S., as Elenor S (2025) outlined, protects speech from government restriction. The following falls outside of the free speech protection:

- “Speech inciting imminent lawless action
- Fighting words that provoke immediate violence

- True threats aimed at instilling fear or bodily harm, or death
- Obscenity, though defining it involved community standards
- Defamation, with a higher bar for public figures
- Harassment, defined as unwelcome conduct severe enough to impact someone's environment
- Speech causing substantial disruption, particularly in an educational setting” (2024 Eleanor S.)

Although hate speech is not explicitly prohibited in this list, much hate speech would fall under these limitations on free speech. While individuals who claim they are not being Islamophobic and are just expressing themselves online, they fail to recognize that much of what they say could fall outside of the free speech protection. Furthermore, the online disinhibition effect makes social media a breeding ground for unchecked Islamophobic and discriminatory remarks. Because users often feel a sense of anonymity and lack accountability, they are more likely to get by with saying Islamophobic and hateful remarks on social media platforms that they would not say in real life. This issue extends beyond Muslims and affects other communities that could be targeted due to their religion, race, or sexuality. Due to the lack of a universal legal definition for hate speech in the legal world, there is not much that can be done to legally restrict hate speech. However, when hate speech becomes incitement, threats, harassment, or any of the others listed above, they can lose their free speech protection.

Sense of Community for Muslim Converts

In Islam, the community is an integral part of both religious practice and personal experience. The Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) and the Qur'an emphasize the importance of maintaining strong communities and how Muslims must have an active role in the

communities they live in. The Qur'an 49:10, mentions the importance of brotherhood, saying, "The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful so you may be shown mercy." Additionally, the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ mentions "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other" the Prophet ﷺ then clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced." (Sahih al-Bukhari 2446, Book 46, Hadith 7). This hadith, along with the Qur'anic verse, establishes the fundamental role of community in Islam. For many Muslim converts who lack local support, most will seek out a Muslim community online because of isolation and loneliness. A sense of belonging is a privilege and a fundamental human need, and whether fulfilled through friends, family, or digital connections, humans want to belong somewhere. This is reflected in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where belongingness is a crucial step toward self-actualization. Self-actualization is when someone has reached the fulfillment of personal potential (McLeod, 2024). Without this sense of inclusion, Muslim converts face extreme senses of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, particularly during Islamic holidays such as Eid, when they may feel excluded by both their old and new communities (Traversing Tradition, 2020). Emotional distress associated with exclusion is well documented in social psychology. There is a direct emotional response to fear of losing support, social circles, and access to resources, which is often involved when someone converts to any new religion, let alone one that is as negatively perceived as Islam. Abrams and Marques concluded that reduced self-efficacy, which is the belief in their ability to succeed in any given situation, can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, and anxiety (Rogozen-Soltar, M. 2021). Additionally, when individuals experience rejection, their natural behavioral response is to withdraw, which can create a cycle of self-isolation. Instances like these for Muslim converts often result in a crisis of faith, not because they doubt Islam itself, but because they feel

disconnected from the Muslim community. Taking all of this into account, Muslim converts lose their faith because of the behavioral response, despite believing fully in the actual religion. In agreement with the Abrams and Marques article, Monique Hassan, a writer specializing in behavioral health and Islamic psychology, discusses this phenomenon (2019). She discusses how, upon taking the Shahada (the testimony of faith), new Muslims are welcomed with enthusiasm, then left alone, not knowing who or what to trust and listen to. New Muslims are left to navigate their journey alone, causing them to seek out their community online to avoid loneliness in person and exclusion in their family and friend groups. However, not all converts have access to a mosque nearby, a welcoming Muslim community, or even facing hostility from their surroundings. As a result, many struggle emotionally, despite firmly believing in Islam.

Culture vs Religion

Another major challenge Muslim converts face is balancing cultural identity with their new religious identity. Culture vs Religion is an important aspect in Islam. A Dutch study by Midden E. in 2023 focused on the relationship between conversion to Islam and feelings of national belonging. It highlighted that conversion is not an instantaneous transformation. Instead, when someone converts to Islam, they do not leave behind certain parts of themselves immediately; there is no clear distinction between the before and after conversion, especially when first converting (Midden E., 2023). In one case study, Melissa, described how she felt at parties when she had converted. She explained that she felt like an “outcast” because she no longer drank due to religious obligations. Despite her refusal, her friends pressured her to drink, making her feel more alienated than ever. Muslim converts are regularly judged and even viewed as traitors for turning away from their previous lifestyles and adopting a new religious identity, becoming less “fun” (Middin E, 2018). Ultimately, this shows that when she converted, she felt

isolated and left out of her previous lifestyle. These challenges highlight the importance of a strong support system for Muslim converts, both in person and online. While this study was conducted with Dutch people, it can also be applied universally because of the constantly differing identities playing major roles in Islam, and consequently can be applied to this paper. Although literature frames social media as both a challenge and a support system, there is still a gap in understanding its direct impact on the religious identity of female Muslim converts. This study seeks to explore that impact in a targeted and evidence-based way.

Methods

The methodology used was a mixed-methods survey design conducted with Google Forms. The target population was female Muslim converts living in the United States. This group was selected because of their visibility, gender, and conversion status, making them more susceptible to Islamophobia and intra-community criticism.

Additionally, mixed methods were used to approach the topic using a triangulation design (Creswell 2014). The triangulation design gains both quantitative and qualitative data and writes interpretations based on the results using multiple datasets, methods, theories, and/or investigators. To get the most accurate responses, the survey needed to include demographics, to limit the amount of confounding variables. Moreover anecdotal experiences to get a clearer picture of how female Muslim converts were actually impacted. The tool was appropriate as it enabled anonymity and comfort for respondents discussing sensitive topics. Open-ended questions were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Questions were measuring variables such as time since conversion, perceived impact of Islamophobia, experiences within Muslim spaces, and emotional responses.

Furthermore the survey included both multiple-choice and open-response questions. Open-response questions were used because they do not restrict the respondent to a set of predetermined questions like multiple-choice questions do (Akman, 2023). Open response allows them to convey their thoughts and personal experiences more accurately due to the type of questions asked, such as being asked to elaborate on a specific experience that directly relates to the question. Some examples of the free-response questions asked in the survey were:

- “Have you doubted your conversion due to discrimination on social media platforms? If yes, please explain.”
- “Have you personally been targeted online due to converting to Islam in the past year? If yes, please explain.”

The multiple-choice questions used two different types of scales, the nominal and the ratio scale. The nominal scale is where the questions address only nonnumerical factors, and the numbers have no numerical value (Akman 2023). The ratio scale is where physical properties of people and objects are quantified, such as height, weight, age, race, etc. (Akman 2023). The reason behind using this combination of tools is to look at the respondent's demographics, general experiences, and personal experiences. The data collected was on topics discussing the respondents' personal encounters with Islamophobia on social media, and their relationship with their religion. This was necessary because the two main points of the research were to find the correlation between female Muslim converts struggling with their religious identity and Islamophobic content on social media impacting their mental health, relationships, and identity.

The population was female Muslim converts, and they were contacted through social media platforms such as Reddit, Discord, Instagram, Facebook, and platform X. This sample is representative of a larger whole because many converts experience the same challenges once

changing their religion. Female Muslim converts are a small sample to look at, so sending the survey out on social media platforms limits any bias that could come from selection bias. Using an online survey does not limit who responds and is open to all female Muslim reverts who see the posts.

Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using an embedded mixed methods design, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with a greater emphasis placed on qualitative findings (George, 2023). This design allowed for the identification of trends in numerical data while also centering the nuanced personal experiences shared through open-ended responses. Out of 48 participants, 91.7% had encountered Islamophobic remarks on social media, and 45% reported experiencing direct discrimination within the past year. These numbers reflect a significant amount of female Muslim converts encountering Islamophobia online. However, in contrast to the high exposure, 67% stated that they had not doubted their conversion. This contrasts with the initial hypothesis that Islamophobia would lead to religious doubt among converts. The qualitative responses allowed for the control of nuance. Many of the participants expressed that although they felt isolated or discouraged, these feelings came more from fellow Muslims than from non-Muslims. Some of the respondents also shared they were seen as “not Muslim enough” or felt excluded from Muslim spaces due to their convert status, lack of cultural familiarity, or not wearing hijab. This shows how the anticipated source of discrimination shifted from external to internal.

These findings are congruent with the work of Hassan (2019), who discussed how converts often received initial support but are then left to navigate their faith alone. Moreover, several participants mentioned struggling with feeling like imposters or being unsure how to

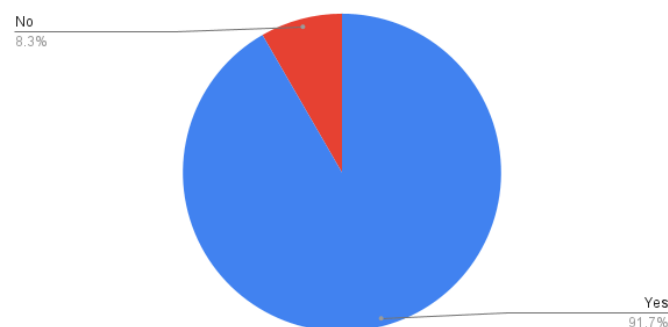
practice Islam “correctly” due to judgment from other Muslims. The quantitative results offered concrete support for how widespread experiences of Islamophobia are among this group; the qualitative responses are what most clearly highlight the emotional and identity-based consequences. This affirms the importance of using a mixed methods approach to measure both prevalence and depth of the issue.

An important implication of these findings is that while external Islamophobia is a recognized struggle, the lack of inclusion in Muslim communities, especially online, emerged as a stronger predictor of doubt, emotional distress, and Identity confusion.

Results

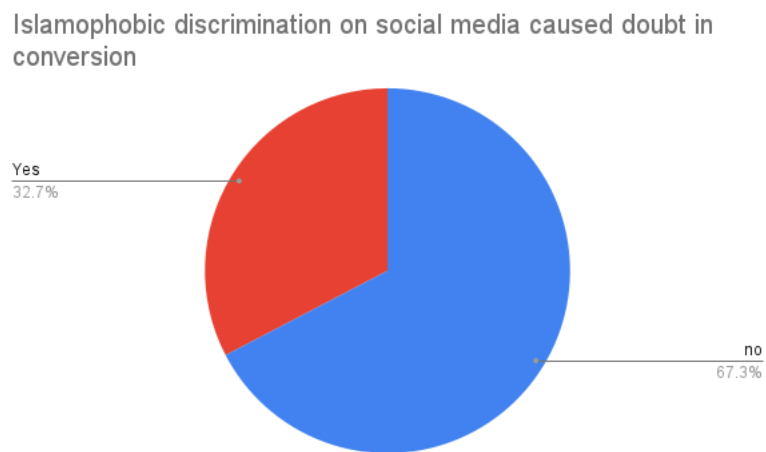
The survey (see appendix B) was completed by November 14, 2024. The first part of the survey was multiple choice. A total of 48 people responded, of which 58.3% were aged 15-25 years old, 64.6% were white (European), 41.7% had been Muslim for 1-2 years, 91.7% had encountered Islamophobic remarks on social media, and 45% had experienced discrimination in the last year.

Count of Have you encountered Islamophobic remarks, actions, etc. on social media platforms?



In addition to these responses, 54.6% of respondents answered “other” to the question “Are your friends and family accepting of your conversion to Islam?” Most of these responses stated that some friends/family had left them, but others had stayed with them. Similarly, 25% of

respondents do not have a support system in person. When asked the question, “In your opinion, which social media have you experienced the most discrimination on due to being Muslim? If any,” the results were largely equal, 22.9% were discriminated against the most on platform X, 16.7% on Instagram, and 14.6% said Facebook. This aligns with the previously mentioned study done by Al-Rawi (2022). Overall, when asked whether Islamophobic discrimination on social media caused doubt in their conversion, 32 respondents (67%) answered “no.” This suggests that Islamophobia online does not make most female Muslim converts doubt their faith.



However, during the second part of the survey, many participants shared that the most emotionally harmful experiences came not from non-Muslims, but from born Muslims online. Examples of this include being excluded from conversations, judged for their lack of cultural knowledge, or told they were not “Muslim enough”. One question asked, “Have you ever doubted your conversion due to discrimination on social media platforms?” and several responses included:

- “Yes, because so many Muslims seem to have rigid thoughts on Islam, and it makes me feel not connected to them. I do not know if I will ever be accepted as a 'real' Muslim.”
- “No, just the Muslim community has made me question it.”

- “Sometimes astagfirullah. Especially in Islamic discussions/communities. It feels like I’m too Muslim for the kaffir but not Muslim enough for the born Muslims so I feel like an outsider to both communities”

There were a majority of two responses; they either responded that no, they have not felt these things because of their conviction, or they felt more outcasted from other Muslims not feeling “Muslim-enough.” The most important piece of data comes from the responses to the question “Have you struggled with your religious identity as a result of discrimination on social media?” which included the responses “A little, it has made me wonder if I’m “Muslim enough” or if I’m strong enough to represent our religion when there’s so much backlash and hatred.” Similarly, another responded, “Not from religious discrimination but from fellow muslims haram policing me.” What all these responses have in common is that Muslim converts feel the most unwelcome from other Muslims and struggle with their identity of being a “fake-Muslim” or not feeling “Muslim-enough.”

Discussion

In America, the prevalence of Islamophobia on social media platforms does not cause female Muslim converts to struggle with their religious identity, instead, Islamophobia strengthens their conviction. Many female Muslim converts do not question their religious identity due to Islamophobic remarks on social media platforms. While they may feel negative emotions and feel lonely, isolated, or depressed due to these remarks, these instances make them more steadfast in their faith. Out of 48 responses, between “yes,” “no,” and “sometimes,” 32 female Muslim converts responded “no” to the question asking if they had doubted their conversion due to discrimination on social media platforms. Meaning 67% of respondents have never struggled with doubting their conversion, these results disprove my original hypothesis, but leave room for

interpretation. The findings show results for female Muslim converts are isolated and targeted most by other Muslims. Several responses showing this include:

“Yes, but mostly from reading and seeing discourse within Muslim communities on social media, where people are arguing all the time. It makes me feel like I won't fit in with other Muslims.”

“By other Muslims. They don't know how to socialize with us. I think it's often a language barrier issue. I've also been excluded from posts on Facebook that friends posted.”

“Yes, because if I'm in a muslim server, I expect to get Muslims trying to help, but in reality, I get hate.”

A gap previously stated in the scholarly conversation is female Muslim converts not being studied as much as their Muslim born counterparts, and their experiences on social media, or how Islamophobia impacts them. The results help fill this gap by reviewing how social media impacts Muslim converts and finding if there is a connection between Islamophobia online and female converts doubting their faith. The majority of female Muslim converts feel as though the online Muslim community is more harmful to them and other reverts than outsiders due to the pressure and negative comments when they convert. While there are also beneficial people out there for when female Muslims convert, there are also very toxic people out there that are extremely harmful to female Muslim converts' self-perception and religious identity.

The findings show that the majority of Muslim converts feel as though they are not “Muslim-enough” and will never measure up to other Muslims and feel the most outcast by other Muslims. My initial assumption was that Islamophobia online would cause female Muslim converts to doubt their conversion and turn away from Islam. Additionally, because converts in

general do not know much about how to practice Islam, they often confuse cultural and religious practices and get ridiculed by other Muslims, which makes them feel worse about their religion, as shown in several responses to the study. These results are important because they allow a new understanding of female Muslim converts on social media platforms and how they are impacted by discrimination not only from outsiders but also by other Muslims. These results indicate that despite the discrimination, in most cases, respondents stated that instead of these instances causing them to doubt their faith, it actually strengthened their conviction.

Conclusions

To conclude, although many female Muslim reverts do not question their religious identity due to Islamophobic remarks on social media platforms, they still feel negative emotions such as loneliness, isolation, or depression due to discrimination. Despite struggling, the majority of responses stated instead of doubting their faith, Islamophobia often strengthened their faith and that they “feel sorry” for those who say such hateful things. More importantly, the majority of respondents felt that the online Muslim community was more harmful to their growth than non-Muslims, citing overwhelming judgment and negative comments when first converting. While there are also supportive people online, there are also very toxic people who expect them to immediately master Islamic practices, which are harmful to female Muslim converts' self-perception and religious identity. The significance of these findings is that even though many female Muslim converts did not report struggling with the belief itself, they had struggles with inclusion and community. This study aims to bring awareness to the Muslim community that although many female Muslim converts might not struggle with their religious identity on social media, they often feel outcasted by other Muslims or targeted by Muslims to know everything all at once. Many responses in the study included that other Muslims, when the

female converts were first converting, came on too strongly, and made them feel as though they were not “Muslim-enough” yet.

One limitation was sample size. Due to time constraints, the study received 48 responses, the survey was unable to look at the long-term effects of Islamophobia or the difference between someone who has been Muslim for 1 year and that same person being Muslim for more than 6 years. There may be a large difference in opinion on the topic from when they started their conversion and when they had been converted for an extended time. Another limitation was that the study could not locate participants in exclusively converted spaces; instead, most were found through general Muslim spaces. This choice was deliberate to reflect the real experiences of what converts face when interacting with the broader ummah online. One last limitation is that this study was self-reported; since it is self-reported, the study could be affected by dishonesty or memory bias.

Future research studies could explore how gender, race, or location shapes the online experience of converts. More specifically, future research could include looking into the difference between male and female responses to the survey. Additionally, since the results concluded that female Muslim converts felt as though other Muslims targeted them more than outsiders, a new study could be conducted looking specifically at how Muslim converts feel more targeted by their own community for not being “Muslim enough” or a “true Muslim.”

What the Muslim community can take away from this study is that while female Muslim converts may not struggle with their religious identity, they do struggle with feelings of inclusion and community, especially when first converting. While this may not impact an individual Muslim, it does impact the whole Muslim community and how people view the Muslim community. When female Muslim converts are not accepted or pushed away, even if by a select

few people, it impacts how the people view Muslims, creating a destructive cycle of Islamophobic beliefs. By recognizing the emotional needs of converts and offering support, the Muslim community has the opportunity to reverse this trend and better embody the unity and compassion Islam calls for.

Works Cited

- Ahmed, S., & Matthes, J. (2017). Media representation of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A meta-analysis. *International Communication Gazette*, 79(3), 219-244.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516656305>
- Akman, S. (2023). *Researcher's guide to 4 measurement scales: Nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio*. Researcher's guide to 4 measurement scales: Nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio - forms.app. <https://forms.app/en/blog/guide-to-measurement-scales>
- Al-Rawi, A. (2022). Hashtagged Trolling and Emojified Hate against Muslims on Social Media. *Religions*, 13(6), 521. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060521>
- Areeda, A. (2017) The impact of islamophobia on the Muslim American Community.
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2952&context=theses>
- Barikisu I, (2017) How the portrayal of Muslim women in US media affects ... (n.d.).
<https://krex.k-state.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/fa2f9c92-4fb5-43a6-bc28-f66edf141631/content>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Erik Bleich Charles et. al. (2023, July 5). *Yes, Muslims are portrayed negatively in American media - 2 political scientists reviewed over 250,000 articles to find conclusive evidence*. TheConversation. <https://theconversation.com/yes-muslims-are-portrayed-negatively-in-a>

merican-media-2-political-scientists-reviewed-over-250-000-articles-to-find-conclusive-evidence-183327

George, T. (2023, June 22). *Mixed methods research: Definition, guide & examples*. Scribbr.

<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/mixed-methods-research/>

Hassan, M. (2019, April 21). *In the age of Islamophobia, why reverts are leaving Islam*.

MuslimMatters.org.

<https://muslimmatters.org/2018/01/10/in-the-age-of-islamophobia-why-reverts-are-leaving-islam>

McLeod, S., on, U., & 24, J. (2024, January 24). *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. Simply

Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.-b). *Islamophobia definition & meaning*. Merriam-Webster.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Islamophobia#:~:text=The%20meaning%20of%20ISLAMOPHOBIA%20is%20irrational%20fear%20of,%20aversion%20to>,

Midden, E. (2023). Becoming Muslim: Converting old and new practices through 'turning away'. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 30(3), 318-330.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068221088165>

Midden E (2018) Rethinking Dutchness: Learning from the intersections between religion, gender and national identity after conversion to Islam. *Social Compass* 65(5): 684–700

Mohamed, B. (2018, January 3). *New estimates show U.S. Muslim population continues to grow*.

Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/>

Mohamed, B. (2021, September 1). *Muslims are a growing presence in U.S., but still face negative views from the public*. Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/09/01/muslims-are-a-growing-presence-in-u-s-but-still-face-negative-views-from-the-public/#:~:text=Though%20many%20Americans%20have%20negative%20views>

Ramahi, D. A., & Suleiman, Y. (2017, January 5). *Intimate strangers: Perspectives on female converts to Islam in Britain - contemporary islam*. SpringerLink.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11562-016-0376-0>

Rehman, I., & Hanley, T. (2023). Muslim minorities' experiences of Islamophobia in the West: A systematic review. *Culture & Psychology*, 29(1), 139-156.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X221103996>

Rogozen-Soltar, M. (2021). The Mobile Ummah: Belonging and Travel among Muslim Converts in Spain. *Ethnos*, 87(4), 806–826. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2021.1925726>

Sahih al-Bukhari 2446 (Book 46, Hadith 7) *Sayings and teachings of Prophet Muhammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Sunnah.com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). (n.d.). <https://sunnah.com/>

Scheitle, C. P., & Howard Ecklund, E. (2020). Individuals' Experiences with Religious Hostility, Discrimination, and Violence: Findings from a New National Survey. *Socius*, 6.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023120967815>

Suler, J. (2004). the online disinhibition effect.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8451443_The_Online_Disinhibition_Effect

Surah Al-Hujurat - 10. Quran.com. (n.d.). <https://quran.com/al-hujurat/10>

Traversing Tradition. (2022, January 25). *Suffering in silence: The convert identity*.

<https://traversingtradition.com/2020/07/30/suffering-in-silence-the-convert-identity/>

Stratton E. Where's the line between Free and hate speech? U.S. Constitution.net. (n.d.).

<https://www.usconstitution.net/free-speech-vs-hate-speech/>

United Nations. (n.d.). *What is hate speech?*. United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech>

Zin, M. et al. (2011). Perspective on fundamentals of fardhu ain among Muslim convert.

Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences, 456+.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A277271007/GPS?u=tel_k_hendhs&sid=bookmark-GPS&xid=4d8c5c6d

Appendix A

Assalamualaikum everyone, I have an AP research class and I was wondering if any female Muslim reverts were interested in taking a survey for me to write my research paper on. My research paper is discussing the connection between Islamophobia on social media platforms and how it impacts female Muslim reverts looking for community online and their religious identity. It's all anonymous and only your responses are recorded. Please reach out for more details. The research question is: In the United States how does the prevalence of Islamophobia on social

media platforms cause female Muslim converts seeking out community online to struggle with their religious identity?

Here is the link to take the survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VxuY9L3n0giGB3JcljdQVS5bMiPZUd585aG08_LTRbY/edit?usp=drivesdk

Thank you for those of you that respond 😊

Appendix B

Required

1. By participating in this study, you agree to participate in a study exploring the relationship between female Muslim converts in America struggling with their religious identity and Islamophobia on social media. This survey includes both multiple-choice and free-response questions. There may be some triggering topics such as Islamophobia, discrimination, and family situations. The survey should take around 10-15 minutes, and you may stop taking this survey at any point. No identifiable information will be collected. Individual free responses may be included in the research paper to show individual experiences. By selecting “yes” below this statement, you agree to taking this survey, acknowledge that you have read this statement and you are a female Muslim Convert.
 - Yes
 - No

Are you a female Muslim Convert?

Yes

No

How old are you?

Younger than 15

16-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

Older than 55

What is your Ethnicity?

1. Black/African American
2. East Asian
3. Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander
4. Hispanic or Latino
5. Indigenous American
6. Middle Eastern
7. South Asian
8. Southeast Asian
9. White (European)

10. Other (Short answer)

How long have you been Muslim?

Less than a year

1-2 years

3-4 years

4-5 years

6 or more years

On average, how many times a day do you pray?

0

0-1

1-2

2-3

3-4

4-5

5

More than 5 (Sunnah)

Are your friends and family accepting of your conversion to Islam?

Yes

No

Other(Short answer)

Are you identifiably Muslim in person?

Yes

No

Other(Short answer)

Are you Identifiably Muslim on Social Media?

Yes

No

Other(Short answer)

Do you have a support system in person, such as family, friends, or other Muslims?

Yes

No

Other

In your opinion, which social media have you experienced the most discrimination on due to being Muslim?

Instagram

X (Twitter)

Snapchat

Reddit

TikTok

Discord

Facebook

Other (Short Answer)

On average, how much time do you spend on social media?

Less than 1 hour

1-2 hours

2-3 hours

3-4 hours

4-5 hours

More than 5 hours

Have you actively sought out Muslim communities online? If so, why?

(Short answer)

Have you personally been targeted online due to converting to Islam in the past year? If yes, please explain

(Short answer)

Has there been a noticeable difference in how people treat you on social media since converting?

If yes, please explain

(Short Answer)

Have you felt Isolated/lonely as a result of discrimination on social media based on your Identity as a Muslim? If so, please explain.

(Short Answer)

Have you doubted your conversion due to discrimination on social media platforms? If yes, please explain.

(Short answer)

Has Islamophobia on Social media caused stress in social relationships? If so please explain.

(Short answer)

Has discrimination on social media caused stress in regards to your family? If so, please explain.

(Short answer)

Have you struggled with your religious Identity as a result of discrimination on social media?

Yes

No

How does it impact you when you see negative stereotypes about Islam or Muslims on social media?

(Short Answer)