CrossMark Cite Us

An Overview of Islamophobia as Othering

Ahmad Saeed[*]

Abstract

This study, "Islamophobia as othering" is an explanatory overview study of the widespread problem of "othering". The concept of "othering" means to consider the Muslims community as others in the society, especially in the western countries. The finding of this study shows that the usage of this term simultaneously increases the ideology of (US and Them). Historically, this Group-based process has ancient root in European countries and America. In fact, hundreds year before the concept of othering was used against Muslims of Spain, whom were forced to immigrate neighbor countries. Nowadays this black history once again has been repeating. Unfortunately, Muslims are scapegoat of this crisis than others. The framework of this paper is an overview based on Social Identity Theory and the researcher tried to explain the concept of "othering", in the light of carnet Islamophobia which is spread in the western media.

Key Words: Islamophobia, Othering, Western Media

Introduction

This article presents the relevant ancient and contemporary literature on othering construct and various dimension and reason of othering. On the other hand, it will reveal that how the term of "other" is occurring towards other than Muslims and Islam. Actually, the media has main role to contribute Muslim and Islam as others. Because media plays very important role to manipulate and shape public opinion. Media has important role in human society and its positive and negative effect is appeared in every decade of last fifty years in the human life. Before reviewing this specific kind of Islamophobia in detail, it is essential to briefly shed light on Islamophobia and western media.

Islamophobia and Western Media

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the world "Islamophobia" means "intense dislike or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; Hostility or prejudice towards Muslims" and is attested in English as early as 1923. The word Islamophobia basically begun in the 20th century and give the impression in 1970 and extending to public thinking after report of Runnymede Trust's

[*] Student, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: ahmad.sshinwari@gmail.com

Commotion on British Muslim and Islamophobia (CBMI). Through this commission report Islamophobia got importance in western media and society.

In the light of this definition Islamophobia means unreasonable fear of Islam which has no reasons but the main aim is just hate them all. Western media crated an unreasonable terror of Islam in hearts of their civilians, that's why everyone hates Islam and Muslims and thinks that all Muslims are terrorist. But in reality, Muslims themselves are the victims of terrorism. Dramatically the coverage of Islam related issues changed in quality and quantity after 9/11 attack of world trade center. The appearance of Islam and Muslims in western media is full of terror and fear they have showed Islam as a cruel religion and the followers of Islam are totally terrible persons. Western media shows in their reports and news stories Muslims as terrorists. The western media using erroneous words and language for Islam and Muslims related stories. They are portraying Islam is a dangerous and senseless religion creating disturbance in western community.

The western media giving the special names in their stories to Muslims addressing as fundamentalists and extremists. They are easily accessible and available in all over the world by this opportunity they had created Islamophobic perceptions of non-Muslim persons. So for the whole miserable situations between Muslims and non-Muslims media is responsible.

According to the study of Kaya (2014) defined that beside the islamophobia western media using different terms for the negative image of Islam and Muslims. Like fundamentalist, extremist, terrorists, Islamic militant etc. western media showing their hatred against Islam and followers of Islam because the words they are used in their stories id full of hatred which are also a new shape of Islamophobia (Kaya, 2015).

According to Abdulkarim Soroush after the tragedy of 9/11 Islam became a question mark in wester n media. Mostly western man and women hatred from Islam and Muslims, because of media bias reporting of events. They are showing just one side of the coin regarding Islam never explored the teachings of Islam in positive manners.

According to the study of Nahid, Kabir Muslims are very low in the amount in Australia 1.5 of the whole population but they do not treat positively with Muslims while Muslims in Australia facing in their offices with a lot of difficulties by Australian citizens hatred. There are varieties of channels, radio stations and newspapers which are working in Australia. The important point is that the Australian over all media is not against of Islam and Muslims the Australian media is in two parts one is against of Islam while other side is neutral and positive (Kabir, 2007).

Now the researcher will review the literature of Islamophobia as Othering in the western media to find out how the western media presenting Muslims as others in the western society and to know about the portrayal of Islam and Muslim in western media positively or negatively.

What is "Othering"

"Othering" is one of the big social problem of twenty-first century around the world especially in western societies, which is beset by seemingly intractable and overwhelming challenges, virtually

every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimension of group-based difference. Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even climate change.

"Othering" is a term that not only encompasses the many expressions of prejudice on the basis of group identities, but we argue that it provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality. Although particular expressions of othering, such as racism or ethnocentrism, are often well recognized and richly studied, this broader phenomenon is inadequately recognized such as:

"Othering" is a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.

The Haas Institute defines Othering as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities. Othering provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality. The opposite word of othering is "Belonging", which means having a meaningful voice and being afforded the opportunity to participate in the design of political, social, and cultural structures.

Problem Statement

According to many scholars the western media propagate that Muslims are fundamentalist, extremists, cruel and terrorists, before and after 9/11 Muslims are portrait as savage nation, in this study the researcher will reveal through review of literature thatare Muslims considered as others in the western countries or not?

Significance of the Study

After conducting this study, we will be able to know that how the western media portrait Muslim and how they are considering as others in the western countries. In this study the researcher will try to review the famous literature of the selected topic. This study also will be helpful for upcoming researcher who want to know about the real literature of Islamophobia as othering.

Objective of the Study

This article is aims to review the Islamophobia as othering and to reveal that how western media portrayals showing Muslim community in the western countries.

Literature Review

Hassan (2015) wrote in his article that one of the researchers, Dr Nabil Khattab, found that Britain's Muslims face both an ethnic and religious penalty in the job market. They are perceived as disloyal and as a threat rather than just as a disadvantaged minority… Within this climate, many employers will be discouraged from employing qualified Muslims, especially if there are

others from their own groups or others from less threatening groups who can fill these jobs. Khattab added: "The main components of this discrimination are skin color and culture or religion. But color is dynamic, which means white colour can be valued in one case, but devalued when associated with Muslims. Equally, having a dark skin colour—Hindu Indians, for example—is not always associated with any significant penalty." Other research demonstrated job hunters with identifiable Muslim names had to send out nearly twice as many job applications before they got a positive response than those who had "white" names (Hassan, 2015).

Jan and Powell (2016) founded in their research that, in 1950s, sociologists developed "group position theory" as a way of explaining race prejudice. According to this theory, group definitions, boundaries, and meanings are the product of complex collective and social processes rather than a result of individual interactions or bias. Through talk, tales, stories, gossip, anecdotes, pronouncements, news accounts, orations, sermons, preachments, and the like, definitions are presented and feelings expressed…If the interaction becomes increasingly circular and reinforcing, devoid of serious inner opposition, such currents grow, fuse, and become strengthened. It is through such a process that a collective image of a subordinate group is formed, and a sense of group position is set.

In the last fifteen years, social cognition research has produced similar findings that support elements of group position theory. In particular, scholars have identified two universal dimensions that locate group positions in society: warmth and competence. According to this model, social groups rating low warmth and low competence are regarded as "despised outgroups," which include poor blacks and the homeless according to research findings. Social groups that are viewed as low warmth and high competence are an "envied outgroup," and groups that are viewed as low competence and high warmth are viewed as a "pitied outgroup" (John.Powell & Stephen, 2016).

According to Powell (2016) finding, human beings appear psychologically programmed to categorize people we encounter at a level below conscious awareness. It is this fact that makes othering ubiquitous, yet the expressions so varied across time and space. Neuroscientists have mapped the networks in the brain that define group boundaries and that internalize meanings and assumptions about different social group into mental shortcuts. These shortcuts are used to evaluate groups, events, and anything encountered in the world, but they also underpin and inform judgments about groups and people that are members of those groups. Perception of individuals as members of a group is then filtered through these shared social meanings. Othering then becomes structured in the world through processes that are institutionalized or culturally embedded at different levels of society, from the neighborhood level to the larger political-legal order.

Rochelle Terman (2017) declares that Muslims much less favorably than other religious and racial minorities. Muslims are frequently portrayed as violent, aggressive, and drawn to terrorism in a range of media, including newspapers.Furthermore, people who believe that Muslims remain culturally distinct from mainstream society are more likely to have negative attitudes about them

and associate Islam with violence, terrorism, and extremism.However, despite evidence that media coverage of Muslims has increasingly turned toward stories focusing on religious and cultural differences between Islam and Western culture (Moore, Mason, and Lewis 2008), few studies have systematically examined the origins of this perception – Muslims as a cultural "other" – in media portrayals (Terman, 2017).

There are two main findings according to Rochelle Terman (2017) research. First, statistical analysis reveals that Muslim women are more likely to appear in the U.S. press if they live in societies with poor records of women's rights, while non-Muslim women are more likely to appear if their rights are respected. This suggests a kind of confirmation bias, whereby Muslim women are associated with countries that violate women's rights, whereas non-Muslim women are associated with countries that respect their rights. Second, U.S. news media tend to frame reporting about women in Muslim societies around the specific issue of women's rights and gender discrimination at the expense of other issues. This framing is biased on two accounts. First, there is an intergroup bias insofar as the issue of gender discrimination is more prevalent in stories about Muslim societies than Non-Muslim societies. Second, there is an internality bias in the sense that this differential remains even after controlling for the real-world conditions of women in the reported country. In other words, stories about women in Muslim countries are more likely to feature content about systemic gender inequality, even for countries will relatively good records of women's rights.

Sian and Sayyid (2012) added; our findings thus expose the hegemony of Islamophobia in the majority of the newspapers examined. The Sun, the Daily Mail and The Independent all constructed Muslims in a largely negative light, this was illustrated more so by the tabloid press. This can be seen to reflect the wider social, public and political discourses surrounding Muslims as fundamentally problematic 'and as representing the enemy 'of the west. Alongside this we also can identify post-racial logics at play whereby issues of racism are trivialized, denied or in some cases exceptional (Sian, Law, & Sayyid, 2012).

Sian and Sayyid declared in their research that, following 9/11 and associated attacks, many representatives including academics, public and political actors and community and ethnic minority activists, raised concerns about the negative constructs of Muslims circulating in the media. Years on we could have at some level perhaps expected a decline in the negativity surrounding Muslims, however, our findings alongside other research has illustrated that unfortunately the negativity still clearly persists and remains hegemonic in the media and the association of Muslims with terrorism has concretized.

From the four themes we examined we can sum up with the following arguments. In relation to the war on terror, fundamentalism and PREVENT, The Sun, the Daily Mail, and The Independent, all used the logics of the (us and them) discourse to frame the issue, as such Muslims were almost always constructed as belonging outside 'the nation.

Mohammad Tahir (2013) discussed in his critic discourse analysis research the issue of 'positive self-representation and negative-other representation'. He found that Muslims

considered as other in western society and some derogatory terms such as 'suspected', 'enemies', 'ringleader', 'radicals', 'conservative' etc. have been used for those who participating in the protests (Those protests who were against the publication of blasphemous cartoons in the European newspapers) and a positive term such as 'moderate' has been used for those who do not participate in the protests (Tahir, 2013).

According to Abu Sadat Nurullah (2010) research Adward Said (1981) claims that he is not comfortable of speaking of 'Islam' and 'Islamic' as the terms have been misused in Muslim and Western societies as a 'political cover' for much that is not religious. In Covering Islam, Said (1981) looks at how the definitions of Islam today are predominately negative saying that the West is radically at odds and this tension establishes a framework radically limiting knowledge of Islam. In fact, Said argues that, through ignorance, cultural hostility and racial hatred, the true nature of Islam is not allowed to be known to others; it is 'covered up'. However, it is the media that form 'cultural apparatus' through which Europeans and Americans derive their consciousness (Poole, 2002; Said, 1981). For example, this was highlighted when a Danish newspaper published caricatures of Prophet Muhammad suggesting he was a terrorist, among other things. It could therefore be argued that these publications suggest that Islam is the root of terrorism (Saeed, 2007). Various authors have noted that Islam and Muslims are treated homogenously in Western media and depicted as the opposite of the West (Nurullah, 2010).

Dr. Allen (2010) declared according to the report of "The search for common ground: Muslims, non-Muslims and the UK media (2007)" that the media typically presented Muslims and Islam as having no common ground with 'the West', where conflict is inevitable - as a threat to traditional British customs, values and ways of life. The report concluded that the media reinforce the notion that "Islam is profoundly different from, and a serious threat to the West; and that, within Britain, Muslims are different from – and a threat to – 'us'" (Allen, 2010).

Research Question

How the western media portraying Islam and Muslims as others in the western society?

Methodology

This is a text analysis and overview study, in which the research tries to collect data according to Islamophobia as othering. In this study, the researcher analyses the relevant literature of Islamophobia and try to find that the considering of Muslims as others can be a kind of Islamophobia or not? The researcher will synthesize and summarizes the important literature regarding to Islam and Islamophobia. By the way, the researcher analyzes some audio and video discourses for the better results.

Result of The Study

Media plays very important role to manipulate, attract and shape public opinion. From the start media had important role in human society and played both positive and negative roles to inform,

educate and persuade public. The magic bullet theory, Agenda setting theory and cultivation theory all these presented that how media change public opinion. The media has significant power in modern society to change public thinking through different ways, that's why western media bombard messages on different cultures like "Muslims are terrorist" also "Africans are poor and bad persons", it has also divided word in different categories like third world countries poor or underdeveloped countries. American and European countries are good and rich countries. It's just because of media portraying different images of different countries according to media's personal wishes.

After 9/11 incident on world trade center USA Islam and Muslims represented in media very badly and they are considering as others. In western countries media news in the form of headlines, stories and images were on religious disharmony towards Islam and Muslims. The last few decades indicate that western communities are considering Muslims as others in the society. So, this all situation of Muslims because of media outlets that they created fear against Islam and Muslims. Unfortunately, the ownership of media is in hands of a small group of rich people and they use media according to their own wish and needs. If they want, they make a hero to zero and make a person from zero to hero. We can say that the hegemony of media giant's controls global market of news and information and only those contents are publishing and broadcasting which are selected by this giant of media. Karal Marx and Friedrich Engels (1845) both were famous Geman scholars said that "the ides of the ruling class are in any age, the ruling ideas". It is functional to the inters of the ruling class for superiority on other class. So, it' means that powerful individuals and groups are exist in every era which controls the means of productions and ideas. In the shape of owners and gatekeepers has been controlled the dissemination of news, information and public perceptions (Collyer, 2015).

Western media either in the form of print media or electronic media are misrepresent the concept of Islam and Muslims. They represent that Muslims are anti-democratic, anti-peace and dangerous for western community. To explore this concept anti-Muslim campaign, they distorted the ideology of Islam. For example, stereotyping is now a day's common which may be in the form of religion, politics and in media. They represent in media that Islamists are fundamental and creates the Islamophobia concept. Webster's new world dictionary explains the word of fundamentalism; "religious beliefs based on a literal interpretation of everything in the bible and regarded as fundamental to christen faith and morals". From the definition scholar observed that in both religious the fundamentalism is present but the western media only targeting Islam and Muslims regarding to this. The US president G.W Bush in his speech about Iraq war explains that it is the war of Muslims and Christians, just like the crusade's wars, this is the fact of Christian Zionism concept. Western media does not cover them in fundamentalist or extremist concept. Basically, western media showed his mercy upon Christian and Jews.

Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of "Othering" and the usage of this term is not new around the world but hundreds

year before the concept of other (We and them) was used against Muslims in Spain. Nowadays we see Muslims are considered as other in western societies. According to Adward Said'sbook Covering Islam (1981) Said argued that the Western media's coverage and interpretation of Islam is extremely influential. The current situation of othrering Muslims in the world and especially in the European societies is completely Islamopobic treat against Muslims and Islam. As we see, if any terrorist act take place by others (Christians, Jews and Buddhists…) are never linked to their religion and they are never called Jewish terrorists or Buddhist Terrorists. But Muslims are labeled Muslim terrorist.

At present there has been a huge difference between Muslims' behavior and Islamic principles. Many Muslims simply do not follow the real teachings of Islam, but rather deviates from it, although they may have Muslim names. The blame should not be on Islam as a religion, but rather the people who fail to follow the principles of Islam correctly in their life.

Another obvious evidence of ignorance is that many movies and television shows, and undoubtedly many Americans, make the mistake of equating Arabs with Muslims .In fact, only about 12 percent of the world's Muslims are Arabs, and far more Muslims live in Malaysia, Indonesia and India than in the Middle East; while contrarily many Arabs, particularly Palestinians, Lebanese and Egyptians, are Christians (Goodstein, 1998).

As such, the media are the channels through which the principles and message of religion gets perceived to the public. In this process, the media can play two roles in the representation of religion: to positively portray it or depict it negatively to the masses. Hence, it depends on the gatekeepers or editors who select the contents to be broadcasted in the media. The ideologies and worldviews of those gatekeepers strongly affect the choice of news and events.

References

Allen, C. (2010). An Overview of Key Islamophobia Research. United Kingdom: National Association Of Muslim Police.

Collyer, F. (2015). Karl Marx and Frederich Engels: Capitalism, Health and the Healthcare Industry. Australia: University of Sydney.

Goodstein, L. (1998, November 01). The New York Times. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/01/movies/film-hollywood-now-plays-cowboys-and-arabs.html

Hassan. (2015, April 11). International Socialism journal. Retrieved from isj.org.uk: https://isj.org.uk/islamophobia-the-othering-of-europes-muslims/

John.Powell, & Stephen. (2016). Othering and Belonging (Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging). California: Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of Calkfornia.

Kabir, N. A. (2007). Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian Media, 2001–2005. Mulsim Minority Affairs, 313-328.

Kaya, S. (2015). Islamophobia in Western Europe: A Comparative Multilevel Study. Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 450-465.

Nurullah, A. S. (2010). Portrayal of Muslims in the media: "24"and the 'Othering' process . International Journal of Human Sciences , 1021-1046.

Sian, K., Law, L., & Sayyid, S. (2012). The Media and Muslims in the UK. London: Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, University of Leeds.

Tahir, M. (2013). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious Othering of Muslims in the Washington Post. East Journal of Scientific Research , 744-753.

Terman, R. (2017). Islamophobia and Media Portrayals of Muslim Women(Acomputational Text Analysis of U.S. News Coverage). Stanford, United States: Stanford University .