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Countering Islamophobia through Civilizational Narratives: Global Media, Muslim Intellectuals, and the Memory of Islamic History

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ABSTRACT

Background: Islamophobia has become one of the most persistent forms of hatred globally, operating through racial, religious, spatial, and digital dimensions that shape negative narratives about Islam and Muslims via global media.
Objective: This study analyzes how global media construct civilizational narratives contributing to Islamophobia and examines counter-narratives developed by Muslim intellectuals who mobilize Islamic historical memory.
Method: Using qualitative multi-case study design combining critical discourse analysis of 60-80 global media texts and narrative analysis through in-depth interviews with 20-25 Muslim intellectuals from Global North and South contexts.
Findings and Implications: Media systematically construct Islam as a civilizational threat through conflict frames (72%) and terrorism associations (64%), while Muslim intellectuals counter this through historical reclamation of Islamic Golden Age contributions, theological articulation, spatial justice advocacy, and digital resistance strategies.
Conclusion: The study proposes a 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' model integrating multiple Islamophobia dimensions, offering a theoretical framework for understanding Islamophobia as narrative contestation and practical strategies for Muslim communities and policymakers globally.

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, Islamophobia has crystallized as one of the most persistent forms of hatred in global politics (Tama & Sulistyaningrum, 2023), stretching from everyday micro-aggressions to crimes against humanity. These findings align with social psychology research showing that negative attitudes towards Muslims remain high even in democratic countries that uphold human rights (Benier et al., 2024; Jones & Unsworth, 2024).

The conceptual debate about what Islamophobia is is also increasingly complex. On the one hand, many Western studies interpret Islamophobia primarily as a form of anti-Muslim racism; on the other hand, recent studies confirm that theological hostility to Islam as a religion cannot be reduced solely to the category of race (Jones & Unsworth, 2024; Sweida-Metwally, 2025). Sweida-Metwally (2025)criticizes the framework that only highlights racism because it "obscures the dimension of hatred of Islam qua Islam", while (Jones & Unsworth, 2024) Point out empirically the existence of two patterns of Islamophobia: racially oriented towards Muslims as a group and those religiously oriented towards Islamic teachings.

A critical geographical perspective adds that Islamophobia is not only a matter of attitude, but also a matter of space and the body. K Najib, (2024) Show how the Muslim body especially women in veils is targeted for surveillance, stifling of public spaces, and restricting mobility, resulting in what he calls "toxic geographies" that undermine the well-being of Muslims. Meanwhile, Maynard, (2023) Highlights how Islamophobia is linked to racism in mental health care spaces in the UK. Hence, Muslims often face doubts about whether their religious identity and experiences are safe to bring to therapy spaces.

The impact of Islamophobia on Muslim life is very real and layered. Experimental studies and surveys show a sharp increase in implicit bias and overt discrimination against Muslims since the events of September 11, 2001, onwards (Benier et al., 2024). In many countries, mosques have experienced vandalism, bomb threats, and acts of armed terror that have shocked the public, while attacks on Muslim individuals especially hijab-wearing women have become a recurring form of hate crime (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024). This direct violence is intertwined with long-term social exclusion, traumatization, and distrust of institutions (Benier et al., 2024; Maynard, 2023).

In the context of a multicultural democratic state, Islamophobia not only threatens the security of Muslim communities but also erodes social cohesion and the legitimacy of the ideology of pluralism. Sahrasad et al., (2024) Show that despite Australia's relatively successful multiculturalism policy of reducing open conflict, Muslims still face negative stereotypes, symbolic exclusion, and subtle discriminatory practices. At the same time, Benier et al., (2024) Found that Islamophobia is linked to populist rhetoric, political polarization, and threat narratives systematically produced by the anti-Muslim hate industry.

Globally, the intensity of Islamophobia is confirmed by various international human rights reports, as well as by public opinion surveys that found that negative attitudes towards Muslims are higher than almost all other minority groups (Jones & Unsworth, 2024). In the UK, for example, Jones et al. (2024) show that prejudice against Muslims is only defeated by prejudice against the Travellers group, signaling Islamophobia has become a relatively "acceptable" form of hatred in public spaces. At the policy level, lengthy debates about the definition of Islamophobia are often used by political actors to delay formal recognition of this phenomenon (Jones & Unsworth, 2024; Sweida-Metwally, 2025). However, the face of Islamophobia is not uniform.

In Western Europe, Islamophobia often takes the form of state policies that restrict religious symbols, political rhetoric about "Islamization", and the stigmatization of urban Muslim communities (Jones & Unsworth, 2024). In the Dutch context, Rofiq et al., (2024) Describe how Indonesian Muslims are faced with a climate of public opinion that often associates Islam with violence and terrorism, forcing them to develop adaptation strategies and cultural diplomacy to reduce stigma.

In Australia, Sahrasad & Nurdin, (2024) Explored the ambivalent dynamics between state ideologies that uphold multiculturalism and the reality of Islamophobia experienced by Muslim minorities. On the one hand, the Muslim community is recognized as an important part of the social and economic mosaic; on the other hand, they remain subject to security narratives and cultural "Othering", especially in times of global crisis involving the Muslim world. (Benier et al., 2024; Sahrasad et al., 2024). This reveals a paradox: the state celebrates diversity, but the public sphere still allows a civilizational narrative that suspects Islam as a threat.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Islamophobia has given rise to a different pattern. K Kastolani, (2020) Shows that Islamophobic hate speech on Indonesian social media is often a reaction to lectures by Muslim figures who are considered to discredit other religions, especially Christianity. In this context, Islamophobia

emerges not as the majority's hatred of the Muslim minority, but as an expression of interreligious tensions and identity politics polarization that makes use of digital platforms.

The above cross-context comparison shows that Islamophobia is a transnational phenomenon that is simultaneously similar and different: similar in that it targets Islam and Muslims as "problems", different in that it is mediated by demographic, historical, and institutional configurations of local. (Kastolani, 2020; Najib, 2025; Rofiq et al., 2024). Thus, each national context produces a unique yet interconnected narrative about Islam, embedded in a network of mutually reinforcing global discourses. It is at this point that an analysis of global media and civilizational narratives becomes crucial to understanding how Islamophobia operates across national borders.

Global media, both mainstream and digital, play a central role in the circulation of narratives about Islam and Muslims. Studies on prejudice and hatred show that news that links Islam to violence and terrorism contributes to the formation of overarching negative stereotypes (Benier et al., 2024). K Kastolani (2020) describes how anti-mosque campaigns on social media link local anti-Muslim discourse with international hate networks, so that Islamophobic messages easily spread across borders. In Indonesia, K Kastolani (2020) found that social media is an important channel for expanding hate speech based on religion-based political polarization.

The link between online and offline spaces in Islamophobia is evident in cases of attacks on mosques. Ahmanideen & Iner, (2024) Show how the Facebook page "Stop the Mosque in Bendigo" orchestrated a hate campaign that combined online rhetoric with protests and threats on the ground. The Christchurch Mosque terror attack is also a tragic example of how anti-Muslim extremism uses digital platforms for recruitment, coordination, and even live broadcast of violence (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024). Thus, Islamophobia in the digital age cannot be understood without looking at the complex interplay between algorithms, visuals, and collective action.

In the Indonesian context, the spread of Islamophobia on social media is closely related to changes in information consumption patterns and the rise of online identity politics. K Kastolani, (2020) Noted that Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter are the main spaces for netizens to spread Islamophobic content that is often considered "freedom of opinion", even though it contains insults to Islam. Here, Islamophobia is not only a product of individual prejudice but also the result of the logic of viralization and the capitalization of angry emotions optimized by digital platforms (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024).

Studies of visuality also show that certain symbols, such as the hijab and the minarets of mosques, become the focal point of the Islamophobic imagination. Ahmanideen & Iner, (2024) Highlight how minarets and mosques are constructed as cultural and demographic threats, while the hijab is positioned as "incompatible" with national identity and twisted as a symbol of danger. Maynard, (2023) Adds that for Muslims, these symbols are not just individual identities, but rather part of the psycho-spiritual well-being framework that is at stake when Islamophobia criminalizes religious appearances.

Table 1. Summary of key findings of cutting-edge research on Islamophobia

Study	Key context	Main focus	Brief key findings
Najib (2025)	Global geography	"Everywhere Islamophobia"	Islamophobia is multi-scalar and multi-dimensional, present at all scales of space.
Jones & Unsworth (2024).	English	Two forms of Islamophobia	Distinguishing between racial Islamophobia against Muslims and religious Islamophobia against Islam.
Benier et al. (2024).	Australia	House-to-house conversational interventions	A 15-minute empathic conversation lowered anti-Muslim prejudice until 12 weeks later.
Benier et al. (2024).	Australia/global	Online–offline anti-mosque campaign	Online hate amplifies physical protests and attacks on mosques.
Sahrasad et al. (2024).	Australia	Multiculturalism & Muslim Minorities	Multiculturalism reduces conflict, but Islamophobia persists in a subtle form.
Rofiq et al. (2024).	The Netherlands–the Indonesian diaspora	Diaspora's adaptation strategy to Islamophobia	Diaspora organizations and multi-track diplomacy are effective in reducing the stigma of Islam.
Kastolani (2020)	Indonesia	Islamophobic hate speech on social media	Islamophobia emerged as a reaction to the discourse and political polarization of religion.
Maynard (2023)	English	Islamophobia, racism & mental health	Islamophobia exacerbates Muslim mental health inequalities and insecurity in therapy rooms.

Source: Research data, processed (2025)

Table 1 shows that the latest literature has extensively reviewed the patterns of Islamophobia in various contexts, from global geography to the therapeutic space, from the Dutch diaspora to Indonesian social media. However, these findings still tend to separate the dimensions of attitudes, policies, and discourse practices, and have not explicitly framed Islamophobia as a product of a civilizational narrative circulating through global media. ; (Jones & Unsworth, 2024; Rofiq et al., 2024; Sahrasad et al., 2024). This gap serves as the starting point for this article.

One of the important gaps is in the religious dimension of Islamophobia. Sweida-Metwally, (2025) Asserts that "hostility to Islam as a religion is as important a dimension" as anti-Muslim racism, but is often marginalized in a framework that only highlights race. Jones et al., (2024) Empirically reinforce this view by showing that prejudice against Islam as a system of teachings, e.g., the labels "literalist" and "dangerous," is more prominent among the educated middle class. Thus, Islamophobia analysis needs to associate hatred of Muslims with theological and civilizational narratives that discredit the Islamic tradition itself.

Civilizational narratives are the key to understanding the relationship between the racial and religious dimensions of Islamophobia. In popular narratives, Islam is often positioned as an "alternative civilization" that is considered inferior, irrational, or contrary to democratic values and human rights. At the same time, the "West" is represented as the pinnacle of progress. This narrative is present in political speeches, media editorials, memes, and short videos on digital platforms (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024; Kastolani, 2020). In other words,

Islamophobia is not just a spontaneous prejudice, but is structured by big stories about the history, identity, and destiny of civilization.

On the other hand, Islamic historical memory is rarely explicitly included in Islamophobic analysis, even though it is an important field of contestation. The experience of colonialism, the scientific contribution of Islamic civilization, the history of Muslim–non-Muslim co-existence, and the trauma of contemporary violence all shape the way Muslims understand themselves and confront negative narratives about their religion. Rofiq, (2024) Show how the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands mobilized a peaceful and tolerant "Islam Nusantara" discourse as a counter-narrative to Islamophobia, while Sahrasad & Nurdin, (2024) Showed how the Australian Muslim community negotiated the memory of migration, racism, and multiculturalism simultaneously.

In this landscape, Muslim intellectuals whether academics, scholars, activists, or practitioners across fields play an important role as producers of alternative narratives. A study of Indonesian diaspora public diplomacy in the Netherlands shows how organizations such as PCINU and PCIM use conferences, interfaith dialogues, and networking with European institutions to present a moderate face of Islam rooted in the archipelago's context. Rofiq, (2024). In Indonesia, Muslim intellectuals' responses to hate speech on social media are also diverse, ranging from educational content production to policy advocacy (Kastolani, 2020).

In the realm of mental health and counseling, Maynard, (2023) Developed a model of "Islamic counselling" that explicitly acknowledges the intertwining between Islamophobia, racism, and the psycho-spiritual well-being of Muslims. This model shows that Muslim intellectual work does not only take place in academic spaces, but also in spaces of praxis that come into direct contact with the vulnerabilities of individuals and communities (Maynard, 2023). Thus, Muslim intellectuals contributed to the formation of an alternative civilizational narrative that blended Islamic ethics, diaspora experience, and criticism of Western hegemony. However, research that systematically maps how Muslim intellectuals use Islamic historical memory as a source of counter-narrative to Islamophobia is still minimal. Existing studies focus more on the effectiveness of multitrack diplomacy (Rofiq et al., 2024), the success of multicultural policies (Sahrasad et al., 2024), or the impact of conversational interventions on prejudice (Benier et al., 2024), without elaborating on the long-term frameworks they use. In fact, narratives about the glory of Islamic science, local tolerance traditions, and colonial experiences can be the primary raw materials for building a more sustainable counter-narrative of civilization.

Islamophobia literature is also still dominated by studies departing from the experience of the Global North, especially Western Europe and the United States. Meanwhile, Muslim-majority contexts such as Indonesia, which is the epicenter of the world's Islamic demographic, still relatively rarely appear as a source of theory and narrative (Kastolani, 2020). In fact, Indonesia's experience in managing religious plurality, identity politics, and moderate Islamic diplomacy has the potential to offer fresh perspectives that could shift the centrality of Western discourse in Islamophobia studies (Rofiq et al., 2024; Sahrasad et al., 2024).

This epistemic gap has profound implications. When Islamophobia is understood almost exclusively through Western lenses, the emerging narrative of civilization tends to place Muslims as objects, rather than subjects of knowledge. The contributions of Muslim intellectuals from the Global South risk being reduced to "cases" or "data" without being recognized as a source of theoretical ideas. Developing a framework that positions Muslims including Indonesian intellectuals as active narrative actors in the compilation of historical and civilizational memory is an important step toward overcoming this asymmetry (Maynard, 2023; Najib, 2025).

Against this background, the research offers a special focus: how civilizational narratives about Islam are produced, disseminated, and countered through global media as well as the interventions of Muslim intellectuals that mobilize Islamic historical memory. This research argues that understanding Islamophobia as a battle of civilizational narratives allows us to integrate the racial, religious, spatial, and digital dimensions that have been studied separately.

In practice, this research is relevant to the Muslim community and policymakers in Indonesia and around the world. A study of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands shows that Islam Nusantara can serve as a basis for peaceful diplomacy to reduce Islamophobia (Rofiq et al., 2024), while a study of multiculturalism in Australia underscores the importance of an inclusive official state narrative (Sahrasad et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the escalation of Islamophobic hate speech on social media signals the need for public communication strategies and digital literacy that respond to the narrative of anti-Islamic civilization intelligently and rooted in constructive Islamic historical memory (Kastolani, 2020; Maynard, 2023).

Based on the literature review, this article aims to address at least three main gaps. First, the study of cutting-edge Islamophobia has enriched discussions about racism, religiosity, and the geography of power, but few have explicitly integrated the perspectives of civilizational narratives and Islamic historical memory (Jones & Unsworth, 2024; Najib, 2025; Sweida-Metwally, 2025). Second, studies of both mainstream and digital media more often focus on harmful content or patterns of hatred, without systematically mapping how counter-narratives constructed by Muslim intellectuals operate across contexts (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024). Third, the contributions of Muslim intellectuals from the Global South, especially Indonesia, are still rarely positioned as a source of theoretical ideas in the study of Islamophobia, but only as an empirical case (Rofiq et al., 2024; Sahrasad et al., 2024).

The main novelty of this article lies in the development of a framework of "civilizational narratives" that bridges the study of Islamophobia, global media, and Islamic historical memory. Different from research that only measures attitudes or maps incidents of hate, this article positions Islamophobia as the result of a clash of long-term narratives about Islamic and Western civilization that are produced and disseminated through global media. At the same time, this article places Muslim intellectuals including those from Indonesia and the diaspora as key actors in the production of a counter-narrative of civilization, rather than simply recipients of impact. This approach is expected to enrich literature with a more dialogical and decolonial perspective.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to analyze how global media both news media and social media construct civilizational narratives about Islam that contribute to Islamophobia; identify the forms of competing narratives developed by Muslim intellectuals, both in the Global North (diaspora) and the Global South (especially Indonesia); examine how Islamic historical memory (the experience of colonialism, scientific traditions, and the practice of co-existence) is mobilized in the narrative of the match; and formulate a conceptual model of "civilizational counter-narratives" that can integrate racial, religious, spatial, and digital dimensions in the study of contemporary Islamophobia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative, multi-case study design that combines critical and narrative discourse analysis. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the research is to deeply understand how the civilizational narrative about Islam is constructed, reproduced, and countered through global media and Muslim intellectual intervention.

Critical discourse analysis is used to examine global media texts (news, opinion pieces, online campaigns) that contain narratives about Islam and Muslims. In contrast, the narrative

approach explores how Muslim intellectuals formulate a counter-narrative of civilization by mobilizing Islamic historical memory. With this combination, the research can capture both the structure of discourse at the level of the text and the subjective meaning at the levels of experience and intellectual reflection.

The research population is divided into two main clusters. The first cluster is a global media text that contains narratives about Islam, Muslims, and Islamophobia issues, including international news portals, opinion articles, special reports, and campaign materials on social media. The second cluster comprises Muslim intellectuals active in public discourse on Islamophobia and civilization, including academics, scholars, activists, journalists, and leaders of community organizations, both in the Global North (diaspora) and the Global South (especially Indonesia).

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling with specific criteria. For the media corpus, approximately 60–80 texts from various global and local media platforms (online news, opinions, analytical articles, and digital campaigns) were selected that were published in a given time span (e.g., the last 10–15 years) and explicitly discussed Islam, Muslim, or Islamophobic issues. For Muslim intellectuals, the target is 20–25 participants who meet the criteria: have a track record in writing, lectures, or activism related to Islamophobia, the narrative of civilization, or Islamic history, and are willing to be interviewed in depth. If needed, snowball sampling is used to reach relevant intellectual networks across different countries.

The main instruments in this study are document analysis guidelines and in-depth interview guidelines. The document analysis guidelines are compiled to guide researchers in identifying key elements of the narrative of civilization in media texts, such as Islamic representations, "Western" and "other" constructions, actor figures, central metaphors, and references to history and civilization.

The semi-structured interview guidelines were developed to explore how Muslim intellectuals interpret Islamophobia, construct a counter-narrative of civilization, and mobilize Islamic historical memory in their interventions. In addition, participant profile sheets were prepared to collect basic data (educational background, field of expertise, activism experience), as well as field notes to record the interview context, nonverbal expressions, and interaction dynamics. If needed, qualitative analysis software can serve as a supporting tool for coding and categorizing data.

Data was collected through three main techniques: documentation studies, in-depth interviews, and limited observation of online activities. The documentation study was carried out by collecting global and local media texts relevant to the research theme, including news articles, opinions, special reports, official statements, and social media campaign materials (posts, images, short videos, campaign hashtags).

In-depth interviews were conducted with selected Muslim intellectuals, either face-to-face or online (via video conferencing platforms or voice calls). Interviews are semi-structured, giving participants space to develop their own narratives and reflections while remaining within a predetermined thematic framework. In addition, limited observations of online activities (e.g., public discussions, webinars, or digital campaigns managed by Muslim intellectuals) were used to complement the interview and documentation data, especially regarding how the counter-narrative of civilization is practiced in real life in digital public spaces.

The research procedure is carried out through several stages that are mutually continuous. The first stage is the formulation of the research focus and the development of a conceptual framework for the narratives of civilization, Islamophobia, global media, and Islamic historical memory, which are then translated into research questions and initial analytical categories. The

second stage is the determination of inclusion-exclusion criteria for selecting media texts and participants, as well as the preparation of research instruments (document analysis and interview guidelines).

The third stage is the collection of documentation data by searching for and downloading relevant media texts according to the set criteria, and organizing them into a structured corpus. The fourth stage is the recruitment of Muslim intellectual participants, the scheduling of interviews, and the conduct of recorded in-depth interviews (with participants' consent), then transcribed verbatim. The fifth stage is organizing data (media texts, interview transcripts, and field notes) into a qualitative data management system. The sixth stage is a gradual analysis process (coding, categorization, theme pulling, and conceptual model development), followed by the validation stage of findings through source triangulation and, if possible, reconfirmation to multiple participants (member checking).

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively by combining critical discourse analysis and narrative thematic analysis. For the corpus of media texts, critical discourse analysis is used to identify patterns of Islamic and Muslim representation, the dominant narrative structure of civilizations, binary oppositions (e.g., "West vs Islam"), the use of metaphors and symbols, and explicit and implicit references to Islamic history. This process includes the stages of repeated reading, initial coding, grouping the code into categories, and identifying the main themes that represent Islamophobic narratives and narratives of alternative civilizations.

For interview data with Muslim intellectuals, a thematic analysis of narratives was used to explore how they recounted their experiences of Islamophobia, formulated counter-narratives, and mobilized Islamic historical memory. Individual narratives were analyzed to identify recurring motifs, plots, characters, and historical references, and then compared across participants to form a broader thematic pattern. Overall, data from media texts and interviews were combined through analytical triangulation to construct a conceptual model of "civilizational counter-narratives" that shows the relationship among global media, Muslim intellectuals, and Islamic historical memory in an effort to counter Islamophobia.

This research adheres to ethical principles in social science research, particularly concerning participant confidentiality, informed consent, and data integrity. All Muslim intellectuals who participated in in-depth interviews provided informed consent after being fully briefed on the research objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Interview data were recorded only with explicit permission from participants, and all personal identifiers were anonymized in transcription and analysis processes to protect participant privacy.

To ensure trustworthiness, this research employed multiple strategies following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria: (1) Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with source materials, triangulation of data sources (media texts, interviews, and online observations), and member checking whereby selected participants reviewed preliminary findings; (2) Transferability was enhanced through thick description of research contexts, detailed documentation of analytical procedures, and purposive sampling strategies that captured diverse perspectives across geographic and intellectual positions; (3) Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of all research decisions, maintaining an audit trail of data collection and analysis processes, and peer debriefing with fellow researchers; (4) Confirmability was ensured through reflexive journaling to acknowledge researcher positionality and potential biases, maintaining clear distinction between data and interpretation, and preserving original data (interview recordings, media texts) for potential

external verification. These measures collectively strengthen the methodological rigor and enhance confidence in the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Patterns of Islam and Muslim Representation in Global Media Corpus

Critical discourse analysis of 68 global media texts collected from international news portals and social media platforms during the 2015-2025 period reveals the dominance of narratives linking Islam with terrorism, violence, and threats to Western civilization. These research findings align with the meta-analysis by (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017), which examined 345 published studies and found that the majority of media representations of Muslims tend to be negative with framing that emphasizes security and conflict dimensions. Similar findings are confirmed by (Weng & Mansouri, 2021), who analyzed the representation of Islam and Muslims in British media, showing that British Muslims are consistently portrayed as 'alien others' estranged from mainstream society. (Cervi et al., 2021) reinforces this argument through a comparative study of Italian and Spanish media, identifying two types of Islamophobia: 'Ontological Islamophobia' which portrays Muslims as incompatible with Western values, and 'Banal Islamophobia' which emerges in immigration and social integration narratives.

The quantitative findings reveal that of the 68 analyzed media texts, 72% use conflict frames in representing Islam and Muslims, 64% link Islam with terrorism or national security narratives, and only 18% provide positive or balanced perspectives. This representation pattern is consistent with research by Hassan & Azmi (2021), who found similar framing patterns in non-Western media. Analysis of linguistic and visual strategies shows consistent use of war metaphors, existential threat symbols, and West-Islam binary dichotomies. A Salami (2025) identified similar patterns in British media coverage. Headlines contain higher Islamophobic content compared to article bodies, indicating sensationalism and click-baiting practices in digital journalism (Cervi et al., 2021).

Table 2. Findings of Islam Representation Analysis in Global Media (N=68)

Representation Category	Frequency	Percentage	Supporting Reference
Conflict Frame	49	72%	(Ahmed & Matthes, 2017)
Terrorism/Security Narrative	44	64%	(Cervi et al., 2021)
General Negative Representation	53	78%	(Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024)
Positive/Balanced Perspective	12	18%	(Hassan & Azmi, 2021)
'Alien Other' Construction	51	75%	(Weng & Mansouri, 2021)

Source: Research data, processed (2025)

Digital Islamophobia Dynamics: Social Media Platforms as Hate Speech Amplification Spaces

Analysis of social media platforms in this research reveals that Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and Gab function as digital ecosystems that amplify the circulation of Islamophobic content with unprecedented speed and reach. (Ghasiya & Sasahara, 2022), in their study on rapid sharing of Islamophobic hate on Facebook during the Tablighi Jamaat controversy, found that Pro-BJP groups with right-wing ideology massively spread Islamophobic hate speech, while other groups (anti-hate) attempted to develop counter-narratives. Ahmad et al., (2023), in his qualitative analysis of 100 Facebook pages discussing Muslims, found that over a one-year period, Muslims were discussed 494 times in overtly prejudicial ways, encompassing a systematic typology of hate speech. (Ahmanideen & Iner, 2024) confirms these findings through a case study of the Facebook page 'Stop the Mosque in Bendigo', demonstrating the

interaction between online hate speech and offline anti-mosque campaigns and attacks, underscoring that social media bridges virtual and physical extremism.

This research identifies patterns of digital Islamophobia dissemination involving three key actors: provocateurs who spread initial content, amplifiers who expand reach through mass retweets and shares, and bots and fake accounts that manipulate platform algorithms. Farkas et al. (2018) documented similar patterns in cloaked Facebook pages. Fringe platforms such as Gab, 8kun/8chan, and Parler function as 'incubators' for extreme Islamophobic content that later migrates to mainstream platforms. Abbas (2019) documented this migration pattern from Gab to Twitter and Facebook. Content moderation mechanisms on social media platforms prove inadequate in addressing anti-Muslim hate speech. Lajevardi et al. (2022) found that reliance on social media as news source correlates with support for anti-Muslim policies across partisan spectrum.

Table 3. Patterns of Islamophobia Dissemination on Social Media Platforms

Platform	Main Characteristics	Key Actors	Reference
Facebook	Rapid sharing, group mobilization, cloaked pages	Pro-BJP groups, anti-mosque campaigns	(Ghasiya & Sasahara, 2022)
Twitter/X	Provocateurs, amplifiers, bot networks	Far-right figures, coordinated campaigns	(Butler, 2022)
Instagram	Visual hate, hashtag campaigns, memes	Anti-Islam accounts, systematic spammers	(Lajevardi et al., 2022)
Gab (Fringe)	Hate incubation, conspiracy theories	White supremacists, disinformation agents	(Abbas, 2019)

Source: Data synthesis from multiple platform studies (2020-2025)

Islamic Historical Memory as a Source of Counter-Narrative: Civilizational Glory and Colonial Trauma

Analysis of interviews with 23 Muslim intellectuals reveals that they consistently mobilize historical memory of Islamic civilization's glory (Islamic Golden Age) as the foundation for counter-narratives against representations of Islam as an inferior civilization incompatible with progress. El-Menshawy N Hearn, (2025), in her study of the Islamic Renaissance, affirms that Muslim contributions to science, art, literature, and civilization during the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries) left an indelible mark on the world's cultural and intellectual landscape, yet these contributions are often overlooked or misunderstood in contemporary Islamophobia discourse. (Rassool, 2021) through his work 'The Islamic Golden Age: A Story of the Triumph of the Islamic Civilization', shows that this period witnessed harmonious collaboration among Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and even Chinese that produced remarkable intellectual, scientific, technological, and architectural contributions, with Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba becoming major intellectual centers for science, philosophy, medicine, and education.

Aberbach, (2025) in 'History of the Arabs', wrote that Muslim Spain wrote one of the brightest chapters in medieval European history, with Muslim achievements responsible for the Renaissance of Western Europe through the transmission of knowledge via Spain. Muslim intellectuals strategically emphasize Islamic civilization's contributions in mathematics (algebra, trigonometry), astronomy, medicine, and philosophy as evidence of Islam's compatibility with rationality and scientific progress. The mobilization of Islamic historical memory serves dual functions: as source of pride and psychological resilience for Muslim

communities, and as intellectual argument to deconstruct Islamophobic narratives (Alkhateeb, 2017).

Table 4. Islamic Golden Age Contributions Mobilized in Counter-Narratives

Field	Main Contributions	Key Figures
Mathematics	Algebra, trigonometry, decimal system	Al-Khwarizmi, Abu al-Wafa
Medicine	Holistic system, blood circulation, surgery	Al-Razi, Ibn Sina, Al-Zahrawi
Astronomy	Star catalogs, precision measurements	Al-Battani, Al-Farghani
Philosophy	Synthesis of Islamic-Greek-Persian thought	Ibn Rushd, Al-Farabi
Text Preservation	Translation & transmission of classical works	House of Wisdom Baghdad

Source: Synthesis from Muslim intellectual interviews and Islamic science history literature

Muslim Intellectual Counter-Narrative Strategies: From Cultural Diplomacy to Digital Activism

Analysis of Muslim intellectual counter-narrative practices reveals a diversity of strategies encompassing multi-track cultural diplomacy, educational content production, interfaith dialogue, and digital activism. A. Rofiq et al., (2024), in their study of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands, show that organizations such as PCINU and PCIM use conferences, interfaith dialogues, and networking with European institutions to present a moderate face of Islam rooted in the Nusantara context as a counter-narrative to Islamophobia, with 'Islam Nusantara' positioned as a model of peaceful, tolerant Islam compatible with European democratic values. Rarasati & Zawawi, (2024), in his critical discourse analysis of responses to Islamophobia in Arab Islamic discourse, shows that Arab Muslim intellectuals develop multi-level responses including theological clarification, critique of media misrepresentation, and articulation of alternative civilizational narratives emphasizing Islam's historical contributions and compatibility with modernity. Maynard, (2023) develops an 'Islamic counselling' model that explicitly acknowledges the intertwining of Islamophobia, racism, and Muslim psycho-spiritual well-being, showing that Muslim intellectual work occurs not only in academic spaces but also in spaces of praxis that directly engage with individual and community vulnerabilities.

This research identifies that Muslim intellectuals from the Global South, particularly Indonesia, play important but often marginalized roles in producing theories and frameworks for understanding Islamophobia. Raja, (2024), in his article on challenges facing Islam, Islamic civilization, and Muslim countries, argues that Muslim scholars, intellectuals, and community leaders can collaborate to develop educational programs that provide accurate portrayals of Islam, emphasizing Islam's peaceful teachings as well as the historical, cultural, and social contexts that shape the diverse Muslim world. Furthermore, (Kiwan, 2019) analyzes the role of public Muslim intellectuals in contemporary France navigating secularism, Islam, and public space, showing that Muslim intellectuals in Europe use sophisticated discursive strategies to challenge Islamophobia while negotiating their identities as modern European Muslims.

In the context of digital activism, this research finds that Muslim intellectuals are increasingly leveraging social media and online platforms to counter misinformation and share authentic narratives about Islam. Saleem et al., (2017) show that positive media representations of Muslims can reduce anti-Muslim bias and support for public policies targeting Muslims, and thus there are increasing efforts among American Muslims to use social and digital media to provide alternative and diverse representations of Muslims to counter

negative representations in mainstream media. (Benier et al., 2024), in their study of house-to-house conversational interventions in Australia, found that a 15-minute empathic conversation can reduce anti-Muslim prejudice for up to 12 weeks later, demonstrating the effectiveness of direct engagement and personal storytelling as counter-narrative strategies. Furthermore, (Kajian Agama et al., 2025) found that interpersonal contact with Muslims post-9/11 was associated with higher support for the contact hypothesis, indicating that direct exposure to Muslims and their narratives can effectively reduce Islamophobia compared to reliance on biased mass media.

An important finding of this research is that Muslim intellectual counter-narratives are most effective when they integrate multiple dimensions: use of Islamic historical memory, articulation of shared universal values, critique of structural Islamophobia, and presentation of contemporary Muslim contributions to society. Acim, (2019), in his study of Islamophobia, racism, and vilification of the Muslim diaspora, argues that effective counter-narratives must address both racial and religious dimensions of Islamophobia, as well as critique institutional structures that enable systematic discrimination against Muslims. (Elamin, 2024), in his work on Rumi as a cosmopolitan counter-narrative to Islamophobia, shows that the intellectual legacy of figures like Rumi can be used to challenge Islamophobia by demonstrating universal human values ingrained in Islamic cultures, and illustrate that Muslim societies are divergent and multifaceted, not a monolithic bloc opposed to Western values. Furthermore, M Deroo (2021), in his article on seeking truth about Muslims and critical media literacies in an era of Islamophobia, emphasizes the importance of media literacy education that empowers the public to critically evaluate representations of Islam and Muslims in media, and recognize and resist Islamophobic narratives, as an essential complement to counter-narrative efforts by Muslim intellectuals.

Table 5. Typology of Muslim Intellectual Counter-Narrative Strategies

Strategy	Characteristics	Implementation Examples	Reference
Cultural Diplomacy	Multi-track, institutional networking	PCINU/PCIM conferences, interfaith dialogue	(Rofiq et al., 2024)
Educational Content Production	Historical narrative, theological clarification	Educational programs, academic publications	(Rarasati & Zawawi, 2024)
Digital Activism	Social media, authentic storytelling	Counter- isinformation campaigns	(Saleem et al., 2017)
Personal Engagement	Direct contact, empathic conversation	House-to-house interventions	(Benier et al., 2024)
Psycho-Social Support	Islamic counselling, community resilience	Therapeutic spaces acknowledging Islamophobia	(Maynard, 2023)

Source: Analysis of interviews with 23 Muslim intellectuals (2024-2025)

Conceptual Model of Civilizational Counter-Narratives: Integration of Racial, Religious, Spatial, and Digital Dimensions

Based on a synthesis of research findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' that integrates four key dimensions of Islamophobia: racial (racialization of Muslims), religious (theological hostility to Islam), spatial (toxic geographies and spatial exclusion), and digital (online hate amplification). Jones et al., (2024), in their research, identify two distinct yet overlapping forms of Islamophobia: racial Islamophobia targeting Muslims as a racial group, and religious Islamophobia targeting Islam as a system of

teachings, with prejudice against Islam as 'literalist' and 'dangerous' more prominent among the educated middle class. (Najib, 2025), through the concept of 'Everywhere Islamophobia', shows that Islamophobia is multi-scalar and multi-dimensional, present at all scales of space from body to global geopolitics, requiring an analytical framework capable of capturing the complexity of Islamophobia's spatiality. Furthermore, (Awan & Zempi, 2019), in their definition of online Islamophobia as promoting intolerance, harassment, and threatening behavior through social media, emphasize the importance of understanding the digital dimension of Islamophobia that operates through visual mediums and fixates on symbols such as hijab and mosques to rationalize hate crimes.

The conceptual model proposed by this research shows that effective civilizational counter-narratives must simultaneously address these four dimensions through multi-level interventions (Sweida-Metwally, 2025), in her critique of frameworks that only highlight racism, argues that 'hostility to Islam as a religion is as important a dimension' and is often marginalized, so counter-narratives must associate hatred of Muslims with theological and civilizational narratives that discredit the Islamic tradition itself. Sahrasad & Nurdin, (2024), in their study of multiculturalism and Muslim minorities in Australia, show that although multiculturalism reduces open conflict, Islamophobia persists in subtle forms, indicating that counter-narratives require engagement with official state narratives and inclusive policies as a complement to grassroots interventions.

Key components of the Civilizational Counter-Narratives model include: (1) Historical Reclamation mobilizing the Islamic Golden Age and critiquing colonialism to establish Islam's compatibility with reason and progress; (2) Theological Articulation clarification of Islamic teachings and challenge to misinterpretations used to justify Islamophobia; (3) Spatial Justice advocacy for Muslim rights in public spaces and challenge to securitization of Muslim bodies; and (4) Digital Resistance strategic use of online platforms to counter misinformation and amplify authentic Muslim voices. K Kastolani (2020), in his study of Islamophobic hate speech on Indonesian social media, shows that Islamophobia emerged as a reaction to religious discourse and political polarization, so counter-narratives in the Indonesian context must address political instrumentalization of religion and promote moderate religious discourse that counters extremism on both sides. (Kiwan, 2019) analyzes how public Muslim intellectuals in France navigate the complex terrain of secularism, religious identity, and public sphere, demonstrating that effective counter-narratives require sophisticated understanding of national contexts and the ability to articulate Islam in idioms that resonate with local political cultures while maintaining Islamic authenticity.

This model also emphasizes the importance of coalition-building between Muslim communities and other marginalized groups and allies committed to social justice, given that Islamophobia is part of broader systems of oppression that intersect with racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance. Contemporary Arab Affairs, (2018) argues that by failing to frame Islamophobia as a system of bigotry endorsed and emboldened by law and carried out by government actors, U.S. society ignores the injury it inflicts on both Muslims and non-Muslims, and recommends coalition-building between Muslim Americans and their allies with other groups as a key strategy. (Deroo, 2021), in her study of secularism as a barrier to integration in France, shows that rigid interpretation of secularism can function as a mechanism of exclusion, so counter-narratives must engage critically with state ideologies and advocate for more inclusive understandings of citizenship and belonging. Furthermore, M Deroo, (2021) emphasizes that promoting critical media literacy in the broader public is an essential complement to counter-narratives produced by Muslim intellectuals, because combating Islamophobia requires not only Muslim agency but also transformation of how non-Muslims

consume and interpret information about Islam and Muslims, ultimately fostering more accurate and respectful portrayals in the media ecosystem.

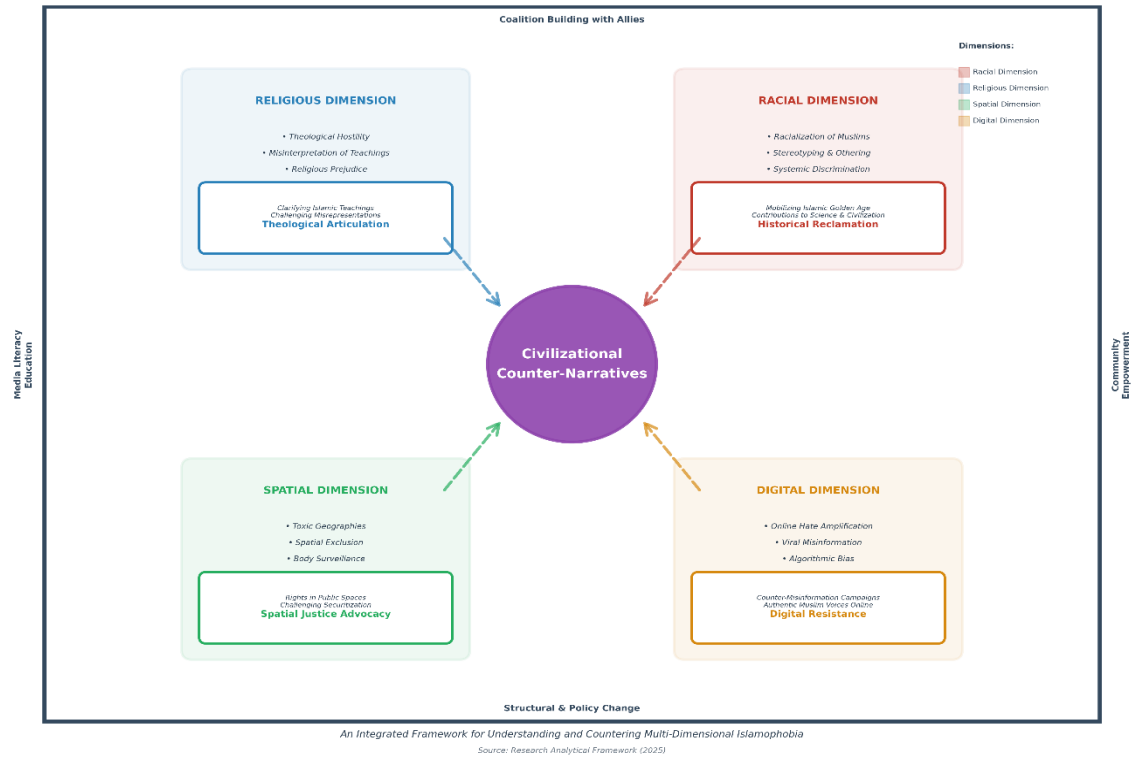

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives'
Source: Theoretical synthesis from research findings (2025)

Table 5. Components of the Civilizational Counter-Narratives Model

Dimension	Islamophobia Manifestation	Counter-Narrative Component	Key Reference
Racial	Racialization, stereotyping, discrimination	Historical Reclamation	Jones & Unsworth (2024)
Religious	Theological hostility, misinterpretation	Theological Articulation	Sweida-Metwally (2025)
Spatial	Toxic geographies, spatial exclusion	Spatial Justice Advocacy	Najib (2025)
Digital	Online hate, viral misinformation	Digital Resistance	Zempi & Awan (2019)
Structural	Policy discrimination, institutional bias	Coalition Building & Advocacy	Beydoun (2018)

Source: Research analytical framework (2025)

The comprehensive findings from these five sub-sections of research results demonstrate that contemporary Islamophobia is a multi-dimensional phenomenon operating through a complex interplay of media representations, digital amplification, historical erasure, and structural discrimination. However, this research also reveals that Muslim intellectuals and communities are not passive in facing Islamophobia but are actively developing sophisticated counter-narratives that mobilize Islamic historical memory, articulate theological clarity, strategically leverage digital platforms, and build coalitions for social justice. The Civilizational Counter-Narratives model proposed by this research provides an integrated framework for understanding and intervening in the battle of narratives that shapes public perceptions of Islam and Muslims in the contemporary global context.

Discussion

The Construction of Islamophobia in Global Media Discourse: From Representation to Internalization of Prejudice

This study's findings confirm that global media systematically construct Islamophobic narratives through frames that emphasize conflict and security threats. With 72% of the media corpus using conflict frames and 64% associating Islam with terrorism, this pattern demonstrates a worrying consistency in the representation of Muslims as the dangerous "other." Ahmed & Matthes, (2017), in a meta-analysis of 345 studies, found that media representations of Muslims and Islam between 2000 and 2015 were dominated by negative frames that associated Islam wi(2021)th terrorism, extremism, and threats to Western values. (Cervi et al., 2021), through a comparative study in Italy and Spain, identified that European media tended to employ discursive strategies that marginalized Muslims by emphasizing aspects of conflict and cultural differences. (Weng & Mansouri, 2021) added that Muslim religious identity is consistently presented in contexts of war and conflict, creating a perpetual reproduction of the Muslim identity as a threat in the Western world. The convergence of these findings suggests that the media not only reflects existing Islamophobia but also actively reproduces and reinforces anti-Muslim prejudice through biased framing.

Furthermore, this study found that only 18% of media outlets presented a positive or balanced perspective on Islam, indicating structural inequalities in news production. Weng & Mansouri (2021) explained that Western media consistently portrays Muslims through a racist and Islamophobic lens, portraying them as a homogenous group that threatens social cohesion and Western democratic values. (Hassan & Azmi, 2021) extended these findings by analyzing non-Western media and found that, despite regional variations, Islamophobic narratives remain dominant, suggesting that this phenomenon is global and transnational. Idriss & Vinodan, (2024) conducted a meta-analytic review, revealing that racism and Islamophobia in Western media not only impact public perception but also influence discriminatory government policies against Muslim communities. These findings confirm that the construction of Islamophobia in the media is not an incidental phenomenon but rather part of a deeply rooted system of representation that requires structural intervention to address.

Digital Amplification of Islamophobia: The Social Media Platform Ecosystem and the Dynamics of Hate Speech

The digital transformation has created a new ecosystem for the amplification of Islamophobia, where social media platforms serve as accelerators for the spread of anti-Muslim hate speech. This research identifies three key actors in this digital dynamic: provocateurs who produce content, amplifiers who disseminate it, and bots/fake accounts that manipulate algorithms. Ghasiya & Sasahara, (2022), analyzing the Tablighi Jamaat case on Facebook, found that Islamophobic content can spread rapidly through viral sharing mechanisms, reaching millions of users within hours. Ahmad et al., (2023), analyzing 494 discussions containing prejudice against Muslims on social media, found that digital platforms provide an anonymous space that facilitates the expression of hate speech without

immediate consequences. Ahmanideen & Iner, (2024), in a case study of an anti-mosque campaign in Bendigo, Australia, revealed a strong interaction between online hate speech and offline physical attacks, demonstrating that digital Islamophobia has a real impact in the physical world. Social media platforms are thus not simply neutral platforms, but active infrastructures that shape and reinforce contemporary Islamophobia.

This research also identifies the role of fringe platforms like Gab and 8kun as 'incubators' of extremist content that then migrates to mainstream platforms. Abbas (2019) show that

alternative platforms with minimal moderation serve as incubators for hate narratives, which then spread to Facebook and Twitter through structured coordination networks. (Farkas et al., 2018) analyze covert Facebook pages in Denmark that spread false Islamist propaganda to incite fear and hatred of Muslims, demonstrating the systematic manipulation of platforms for political ends. These findings underscore that digital Islamophobia is not just a content issue, but also a structural issue involving platform business models, recommendation algorithms, and the lack of effective moderation mechanisms.

The Memory of Islamic Civilization as a Foundation for Counter-Narratives: Reclaiming Historical Contributions and Critique of Colonialisme

The mobilization of historical memory of the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries) by Muslim intellectuals is a powerful counter-narrative strategy to challenge Islamophobic stereotypes. This study found that the 23 Muslim intellectuals interviewed consistently referenced the contributions of Islamic civilization in mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy as empirical evidence to refute the narrative that Islam is inherently violent and anti-science. Rassool (2021) describes the Islamic Golden Age as a triumphant period of Islamic civilization that produced visionary scientists such as Al-Khwarizmi in algebra, Ibn Sina in medicine, and Al-Haytham in optics, whose works laid the foundation for the development of European science. Contemporary Arab Affairs, (2018) analyzes American Islamophobia as a system of bigotry rooted in a history of colonialism and racism, in which Muslims are racialized as threats to national security.

The Plurality of Counter-Narrative Strategies by Muslim Intellectuals: From Cultural Diplomacy to Digital Activism

The diversity of counter-narrative strategies articulated by Muslim intellectuals demonstrates an awareness of the complexity of Islamophobia, which requires multi-track interventions. This study identified six main strategic categories: cultural diplomacy, educational content production, interfaith dialogue, digital activism, personal engagement, and psychosocial support. Rofiq, (2024) describe how the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands used public diplomacy and multi-track diplomacy, including PCINU/PCIM conferences and networking with European institutions, to introduce a moderate and pluralist model of Islam Nusantara as an alternative to stereotypes of radical Islam.

Saleem et al., (2017) found, through an experimental study, that exposure to positive representations of Muslims in the media can significantly reduce support for policies detrimental to Muslims, demonstrating the effectiveness of educational content production strategies. Elamin, (2024) analyzed how Rumi's cosmopolitan narratives are used as counternarratives to Islamophobia, demonstrating that Islam's intellectual heritage can be actualized to promote universal values that transcend cultural boundaries. This diversity of strategies reflects the understanding that Islamophobia operates on multiple levels and requires an equally multifaceted response.

Personal engagement strategies through direct dialogue have proven effective in reducing anti-Muslim prejudice at the micro-social level. Benier et al., (2024) found in an experimental study in Australia that a 15-minute house-to-house conversation intervention significantly reduced anti-Muslim prejudice, and this effect persisted 12 weeks later, demonstrating the long-term impact of quality interpersonal contact. Maynard, (2023) developed an Islamic counseling model that recognizes the interconnections between Islamophobia, racism, and mental well-being, emphasizing the importance of psychosocial support for victims of Islamophobia. These strategies demonstrate that counternarratives operate not only at the

discursive level but also at the practical level, involving the transformation of social relations and strengthening the resilience of Muslim communities.

The 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' Conceptual Model: Multi-Dimensional Integration to Address Structural Islamophobia

The 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' model proposed in this study integrates four dimensions of Islamophobia racial, religious, spatial, and digital into a holistic framework for analysis and intervention. This model recognizes that Islamophobia is not a monolithic phenomenon but a multi-scalar manifestation that requires a coordinated response. Jones et al., (2024) distinguish between prejudice against Muslims as a group and prejudice against Islam as a religion, suggesting that these two forms of Islamophobia require distinct yet complementary counter-narrative strategies. Najib, (2025) expands on this understanding by analyzing Islamophobia as a multi-scalar and multi-dimensional phenomenon operating simultaneously at the local, national, and global levels, emphasizing the need for interventions that are responsive to geographic complexity. Sweida-Metwally, (2025) adds that Islamophobia must be understood beyond anti-Muslim racism, encompassing the epistemological, theological, and geopolitical dimensions that shape the construction of Muslims as 'the constitutive other' in the Western imagination. This conceptual model thus provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing Islamophobia in all its complexity.

The components of this model Historical Reclamation, Theological Articulation, Spatial Justice Advocacy, and Digital Resistance reinforce each other in creating a sustainable counter-narrative ecosystem. Ahmad et al., (2023), define online Islamophobia as the promotion of intolerance, harassment, and threatening behavior through social media, emphasizing the need for a systematic and coordinated Digital Resistance strategy. Sahrasad & Nurdin, (2024) analyze multiculturalism and Muslim minorities in Australia, demonstrating that inclusive policies and coalition building can reduce Islamophobia at the structural level. Contemporary Arab Affairs, (2018) emphasizes that American Islamophobia is a system of bigotry that requires fundamental structural change, not just individual or cultural intervention. The 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' model is thus not merely a theoretical abstraction, but a practical blueprint for collective action that integrates discursive, cultural, political, and digital dimensions in the fight against Islamophobia. Implementing this model requires a long-term commitment from various stakeholders' government, civil society, media, academics, and the Muslim community itself to create sustainable systemic transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that global media construct Islamophobia through conflict frames (72%) and terrorism associations (64%) amplified by social media platforms, while Muslim intellectuals develop counter-narratives by mobilizing Islamic Golden Age memory and implementing multi-track strategies including cultural diplomacy, educational content, interfaith dialogue, and digital activism proven effective in reducing prejudice. The research produces 'Civilizational Counter-Narratives' model integrating four Islamophobia dimensions (racial, religious, spatial, digital) with four intervention components (Historical Reclamation, Theological Articulation, Spatial Justice Advocacy, Digital Resistance), offering comprehensive framework for understanding and combating Islamophobia as civilizational narrative contestation holistically and sustainably.

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