

MUSLIM INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL POLITICS IN NON-MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRIES

M. Royyan Nafis Fathul Wahab¹

¹AIN Kediri, Indonesia, m.royyannafis@iainkediri.ac.id

Abstract The primary objective of this study is to understand the socio-political status of Muslim individuals inside non-Muslim majority countries. Specifically, it wants to examine the various hurdles Muslims encounter in these contexts and the tactics they employ to navigate and surmount these obstacles. This research explores the surrounding community's reactions and attitudes toward Muslims' political engagements. The research method used in this study is qualitative, utilizing a library research approach to gather data. The data is collected through an extensive review of pertinent literature. The study's findings indicate that Muslims actively and strategically engage in local politics to achieve integration while preserving their religious identity. Despite encountering prejudice and discrimination, many individuals adhering to the Islamic faith have successfully surmounted these obstacles by establishing support networks and engaging in collaborative efforts with various groups. The responses of society towards Muslim engagement have exhibited a range of outcomes, with interfaith education and discussion emerging as valuable strategies in fostering comprehension and acceptance. In conclusion, the active participation of Muslims in municipal politics holds the potential to engender constructive transformations and foster a culture characterized by inclusivity.

Keywords: Local Politics, Muslim Involvement, Countries

Abstrak Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai status sosial-politik Muslim di dalam negara-negara mayoritas non-Muslim. Penelitian ini mengkaji berbagai tantangan yang dihadapi oleh Muslim dalam konteks ini dan strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga berusaha mengeksplorasi respon masyarakat sekitar terhadap keterlibatan muslim dalam politik lokal. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif, dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan untuk mengumpulkan data. Data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan ekstensif terhadap literatur terkait. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa umat Islam secara aktif dan strategis terlibat dalam politik lokal untuk mencapai integrasi sambil mempertahankan identitas agama mereka. Meskipun menghadapi prasangka dan diskriminasi, banyak individu yang menganut agama Islam telah berhasil mengatasi hambatan ini dengan membangun jaringan dukungan dan terlibat dalam upaya kolaboratif dengan berbagai kelompok. Tanggapan masyarakat terhadap keterlibatan Muslim telah menunjukkan hasil yang beragam, dengan pendidikan dan diskusi lintas agama yang muncul sebagai strategi yang efektif dalam mempromosikan pemahaman dan toleransi. Kesimpulannya, keterlibatan muslim dalam politik lokal memiliki potensi untuk menghasilkan transformasi konstruktif dan menumbuhkan budaya inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Politik Lokal, Keterlibatan Muslim, Negara

Introduction

In the contemporary epoch of globalization, the intricate occurrence of transnational migration has engendered a progressively diverse societal fabric within numerous nations. In modern Western societies, it is evident that the Muslim demographic is experiencing notable and discernible growth. In light of recent developments, it is imperative to acknowledge that the involvement of individuals adhering to the Islamic faith in various facets of public life, notably within local politics, has become subject to meticulous examination and evaluation. Numerous scholars have engaged in scholarly discourse regarding Muslim involvement in national politics in non-Muslim-majority nations. For instance, Einat Jan examines the existing political influence of the Muslim minority in the United States and Britain.¹ The scholarly inquiry reveals that the Muslim minority in both nations has been subjected to securitization and surveillance, resulting in a curtailment of their political agency. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Muslim lobby has demonstrated a degree of efficacy in certain circumstances, exerting its influence on policy formulation and electoral results. However, it is worth noting that exploring their engagement in local politics, specifically within the context of municipal and provincial spheres, needs to receive more attention within the academic sphere.

The distinctiveness inherent in local politics lies in its intrinsic capacity for direct engagement with the immediate community, necessitating a more profound comprehension of the intricate social dynamics that permeate the local context. Public perceptions of local influence are essential for understanding social networks, political party networks, civic engagement, and local politics.² Previous scholarly inquiries have duly underscored the multifaceted engagement of adherents of the Islamic faith within national

¹ Einat Jan, "The Political Influence of an Interest Group: A Comparative Study on the Muslim Minority in the United States and Britain," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10, no. 1 (2023): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01586-1>.

² Joshua Hochberg and Eitan Hersh, "Public Perceptions of Local Influence," *Research & Politics* 10, no. 1 (January 14, 2023): 205316802311524, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680231152421>.

politics in contexts where Islam is not the predominant religion. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the intricacies of such participation may diverge when scrutinized through the lens of local politics. The circumstance above engendered a discernible void within the existing scholarly works, necessitating its subsequent resolution. By adopting a more focused approach towards local politics, scholars can delve into the intricate nuances of how the Muslim identity is expressed through political engagement and examine the corresponding reactions of local communities towards such involvement.

Upon closer examination of this particular theme, a multitude of inquiries emerge. What is how Muslims situate themselves within the framework of the local political landscape? What are the challenges that they encounter? How do individuals effectively surmount challenges and generate favorable circumstances? What is the response of local communities to the participation of Muslims in local politics? This methodology will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that influence relationships between individuals identifying as Muslims and those who do not identify as Muslims within the context of local politics. Furthermore, it will shed light on the consequences of these interactions on social cohesiveness and societal integration.

The primary objective of this research theme revolves around comprehending the extent of Muslim engagement in domestic political affairs within nations where the majority population adheres to a non-Muslim faith. The overarching aspiration is to offer valuable perspectives on strategies to bolster Muslim communities' integration and active involvement in these contexts. Furthermore, The current study aims to provide valuable recommendations to policymakers on creating an inclusive local political environment that encourages the active participation of all community groups, predominantly the Muslim minority.

Method

This study will employ a qualitative approach, utilizing the library research method. The primary data sources encompass scholarly literature examining the dynamics of Islam, its intersection with local political systems, and the dynamics of Muslim-non-Muslim relations. Furthermore, it is crucial to include scientific publications that have undergone rigorous peer-review procedures, research reports conducted by reputable institutions, and official papers issued by relevant governmental bodies or international organizations as valuable data sources. The data-collecting process's initial stage will involve identifying pertinent literature sources. Subsequently, these sources will be comprehensively reviewed, focusing on extracting and documenting salient elements from each source. The gathered data will be organized into several categories according to specific themes to assist the analysis process. By employing a library research methodology, the present study aims to offer a comprehensive and contextual comprehension of Muslim participation in domestic politics within nations where Muslims constitute a minority population.

Results and Discussion

1. *Position of Muslims In The Local Political Context*

Muslims residing in non-Muslim majority countries find themselves in a distinctive and arduous predicament within the local political milieu. One must conscientiously contemplate one's religious identity to integrate and actively engage within preexisting political frameworks. As per the scholarly insights presented by Matesan, it is evident that individuals adhering to the Islamic faith residing in Western nations frequently experience a sense of marginalization within political engagement despite harboring a genuine aspiration to participate and make meaningful contributions actively.³ The phenomenon

³ Ioana Emy Matesan, "Grievances and Fears in Islamist Movements: Revisiting the Link between Exclusion, Insecurity, and Political Violence," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 44–62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz042>.

above can be attributed to the prevailing negative perceptions surrounding Islam and its adherents, frequently perpetuated by the media and political discourse. The perception above may potentially impede the active engagement of Muslims in the realm of local politics. In numerous nations, adherents of the Islamic faith are frequently subjected to discriminatory practices and prejudiced attitudes. This phenomenon can significantly influence individuals' self-perception and their subsequent engagement with the political apparatus. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that numerous adherents of the Islamic faith are adeptly maneuvering through these trials and actively enriching local politics. It is a testament to Muslim communities' multifaceted nature and unwavering fortitude.

To actively engage in the realm of local politics, a considerable number of individuals who identify as Muslims prefer to employ tactics that amalgamate their religious affiliation with their national or regional association. According to Slageren's research, European Muslims tend to establish alliances with groups that share common goals, such as human rights organizations or other minority communities.⁴ This strategic approach enables individuals who identify as Muslims to enhance their standing and cultivate broader societal endorsement. Through collaborative efforts with other groups, Muslims can effectively demonstrate their shared interests with fellow citizens and establish themselves as an indispensable component of society. Notwithstanding the obstacles, such collaborative efforts can be an efficacious means for Muslims to enhance their impact on local politics.

In light of the advancements made, it is pertinent to acknowledge that Muslims residing in non-Muslim majority nations continue to encounter many obstacles within local politics. As per the scholarly work Peace, a prominent concern is the absence of adequate representation of individuals adhering to the

⁴ Jaap van Slageren and Frank van Tubergen, "Generalised Trust among Second-Generation Muslim and Non-Muslim Minority Groups in Europe," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 28, no. 1 (2021): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-bja10042>.

Islamic faith within positions of authority and influence.⁵ In light of the absence of sufficient representation, Muslims encounter considerable challenges in exerting influence on policy matters and safeguarding the inclusion of their interests. Nevertheless, in light of the burgeoning recognition of the paramount significance of inclusivity and diversity, there emerge auspicious prospects for adherents of the Islamic faith to attain augmented representation and engage more dynamically within political discourse. Through the pursuit of knowledge, the dissemination of information, and the enthusiastic engagement in societal affairs, adherents of Islam can surmount the obstacles before them and guarantee the amplification of their perspectives. Muslims residing in countries where they constitute a minority within a predominantly non-Muslim population possess a remarkable capacity to make meaningful contributions to local politics. Given the myriad obstacles, individuals must devise a prudent course of action and engage in fruitful cooperation with various collectives. By doing so, they can effectively bring about constructive transformations and guarantee due consideration of their vested concerns.

2. Challenges And Obstacles

The participation of Muslims in municipal politics within countries where they are in the minority presents distinctive and intricate obstacles. One primary obstacle pertains to the adverse perception surrounding Islam and its adherents. Based on the findings of a study by Grewal, individuals who identify as Muslims and engage in political activities within non-Muslim nations frequently experience marginalization and discriminatory treatment.⁶ The phenomenon above arises due to prevailing negative attitudes towards Islam and its adherents, frequently regarded as "other" or "foreign." This perception

⁵ Timothy Peace, "Conclusion: The Future of Muslim Political Activism in Europe," in *European Social Movements and Muslim Activism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 157–65, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137464002_8.

⁶ Sharan Grewal and Shadi Hamid, "Discrimination, Inclusion, and Anti-System Attitudes among Muslims in Germany," *American Journal of Political Science* 0, no. 0 (2022): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12735>.

is derived from ordinary people and prevalent among policy officials and the media.

Muslim individuals engaging in political activities often struggle to demonstrate allegiance to the state while preserving their Islamic identity. The difficulty is further intensified by a political discourse frequently perceiving Islam as a menace to Western principles. In specific electoral contexts in Europe and North America, candidates employ speech characterized by opposition to immigration and Islam to garner popular backing.⁷ The circumstance above engenders an inhospitable atmosphere for Muslims who aspire to engage in political activities.

Furthermore, Muslims encounter various structural problems. In many nations, legislative measures or governmental regulations limit the political engagement of those practicing the Islamic faith. One potential legislative action could be implementing a rule restricting the public display of headscarves⁸, while another policy approach could involve imposing financial constraints on Muslim organizations.⁹ The problems above provide significant obstacles for Muslims to engage in political activities on par with their fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the absence of chances for Muslims to engage in political activities in non-Muslim nations is not necessarily the case. Indeed, numerous instances exist wherein Muslims have effectively influenced legislation and garnered backing from the broader community. An essential factor in achieving success is establishing a robust network of supportive individuals and strategic relationships with other organizations.

⁷ David Andreas Bell, Marko Valenta, and Zan Strabac, "A Comparative Analysis of Changes in Anti-Immigrant and Anti-Muslim Attitudes in Europe: 1990–2017," *Comparative Migration Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00266-w>.

⁸ "Wearing Thin: Restrictions on Islamic Headscarves and Other Religious Symbols," in *Forced Migration, Human Rights and Security* (Hart Publishing, n.d.), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472564283.ch-007>; Andrew Hambler, "Neutrality and Workplace Restrictions on Headscarves and Religious Dress: Lessons from Achbita and Bougnaoui," *Industrial Law Journal* 47, no. 1 (2018): 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.1093/indlaw/dwx033>.

⁹ Thorsten Beck and Martin Brown, "Which Households Use Banks? Evidence from the Transition Economies," *Conference on Household Finance and Consumption*, no. 1295 (2011).

Muslims can enhance their impact and surmount prevailing challenges by collaborating with like-minded groups that share their interests and objectives.¹⁰

Furthermore, it is of utmost significance for adherents of Islam to actively partake in interfaith dialogue, fostering a harmonious rapport with the broader society and cultivating a comprehensive comprehension of the Islamic faith. The achievement of this objective can be realized through the facilitation of educational initiatives, the dissemination of knowledge, the promotion of advocacy efforts, and active engagement in various civil society organizations. By engaging in such endeavors, adherents of Islam possess the capacity to effectuate a transformation in the prevailing negative perceptions that surround their faith, thereby fostering the cultivation of more constructive and harmonious associations with the broader populace.

Acknowledging the diverse obstacles Muslims face when aspiring to engage in political endeavors within non-Muslim nations is pertinent. However, it is equally imperative to recognize the latent prospects that can be harnessed and capitalized. Through implementing a well-devised strategic approach and fostering harmonious collaboration with various societal factions, adherents of the Islamic faith possess the potential to assume a significant position within local politics. By doing so, they can effectively advocate for the principles of justice and equality, thereby ensuring their equitable dissemination amongst all community members, irrespective of their religious affiliation.

The prevailing negative stereotypes surrounding Islam and Muslims significantly influence how they are perceived within the political sphere, particularly in nations where Muslims constitute a minority population. In 2018, a report from the esteemed news outlet Al-Jazeera brought a matter of great concern to the forefront. It shed light upon the disconcerting phenomenon observed in certain Western nations, wherein political campaigns have been observed to employ inherently anti-Muslim rhetoric in a calculated attempt to

¹⁰ van Slageren and van Tubergen, "Generalised Trust among Second-Generation Muslim and Non-Muslim Minority Groups in Europe."

garner support and sway public opinion.¹¹ The rhetoric above, which strategically exploits the apprehensions and lack of knowledge surrounding Islam, engenders supplementary obstacles for Muslims aspiring to engage in politics.

The media, as a fundamental component of democratic societies, bears the obligation to furnish precise and impartial information. Nevertheless, it is commonly observed that an imbalance exists in the coverage of Islam and Muslims in journalistic reportage. One such phenomenon is the disproportionate emphasis placed on extremist crimes committed by individuals or groups identifying as Muslim, in contrast to the relative neglect or subdued reporting of positive contributions and success stories from Muslim communities. Consequently, the prevailing perception of Muslims inside the public sphere is erroneous.

The ramifications of these adverse preconceptions extend beyond mere public perception. Muslim individuals who pursue public office frequently encounter personal attacks that predominantly target their religious beliefs rather than engaging with substantive political matters. This phenomenon engenders an inhospitable milieu for individuals seeking to practice the Islamic faith, necessitating a perpetual defense of their religious identity.

To solve this dilemma, there is an urgent requirement for public education about Islam and the societal contributions made by Muslims. The dissemination of accurate knowledge about Islam and Muslims can be achieved through the implementation of educational programs in schools, as well as through the organization of seminars and workshops. Furthermore, the media must demonstrate a commitment to impartiality and objectivity in their reportage, acknowledging the Muslim population's multifaceted nature and diverse characteristics. Hence, there exists potential for enhancing individuals' perceptions and augmenting Muslim engagement in political affairs.

¹¹ Patrick Strickland, "Anti-Muslim Campaigning in the US Is a 'Losing Strategy': Report" (United States, 2018), <https://doi.org/https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/22/anti-muslim-campaigning-in-the-us-is-a-losing-strategy-report>.

Including Muslim individuals in local politics inside non-Muslim majority countries is not merely a matter of preference but a crucial requirement to uphold principles of justice and equality. For instance, Dancygier's research indicates that the implementation of proportional representation in politics has the potential to address the challenges of prejudice experienced by the Muslim community.¹² Insufficient representation of the Muslim community may marginalize their opinions and interests, thereby leading to the formulation of policies that fail to align with their specific needs and ambitions.¹³

The active participation of those identifying as Muslims in the political decision-making process ensures the inclusion of their unique perspectives and specific demands. It holds particular significance, particularly in nations characterized by substantial Muslim demographics. The absence of active engagement from the Muslim community poses a potential hazard, as it may result in the formulation of policies that lack sensitivity or perhaps contradict the values and beliefs held by this community. Hence, fostering Muslim engagement in the political sphere, encompassing electoral participation and candidature becomes crucial in advancing societal inclusivity. The advantages above extend beyond the Muslim community and surrounding society as a whole because inclusive policies tend to be more equitable and productive.

In the contemporary global milieu, those adhering to the Islamic faith residing in countries where Islam is not the predominant religion frequently need help concerning the reconciliation of their national and religious affiliations. According to a study by Cardenas, many Muslims residing in Europe have a sense of conflict arising from the dual nature of their identity as citizens and

¹² Rafaela Dancygier, "The Left and Minority Representation: The Labour Party, Muslim Candidates, and Inclusion Tradeoffs," *Comparative Politics* 46, no. 1 (October 2013): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041513807709338>.

¹³ Lee Crawford and Ukasha Ramli, "Discrimination by Politicians against Religious Minorities: Experimental Evidence from the UK," *Party Politics* 28, no. 5 (September 2022): 826-33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211021053>; Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, "Discrimination and the Aim of Proportional Representation," in *Born Free and Equal?* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 193-216, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199796113.003.0008>.

followers of Islam.¹⁴ The predicament above is characterized by its intricate nature, stemming from multifaceted social, political, and cultural influences.

The imperative to assimilate into the dominant society is frequently understood as necessitating abandoning or reducing religious practices and identities. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that genuine integration should be distinct from complete assimilation. Conversely, genuine integration entails acknowledging and appreciating variety, encompassing many religious views and practices. Regrettably, in some instances, individuals who identify as Muslims experience a sense of obligation to decide between upholding the ideals of being a "model citizen" and adhering to the principles of their faith as faithful Muslims.

In certain circumstances, individuals who identify as Muslims may perceive a necessity to emphasize their national affiliation to obtain acceptance within the broader societal context. Conversely, in other scenarios, they may perceive a need to emphasize their religious affiliation to attain acknowledgment and validation inside the Muslim community. This predicament has the potential to generate internal conflict and a sense of detachment from both societal groups.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the coexistence of multiple identities can positively impact society, potentially enriching it. For instance, individuals practicing Islam in France or England may observe the festival of Eid by incorporating local customs and establishing novel traditions that amalgamate components from both societies. Therefore, host nations must possess a comprehensive understanding and profound appreciation of the intricate nature of Muslim identity. Moreover, they should create an environment that allows individuals to freely manifest both dimensions of their identity without being compelled to favor one over the other.

¹⁴ Diana Cárdenas, "Dual Identity, Minority Group Pressure, and the Endorsement of Minority Rights: A Study among Sunni and Alevi Muslim in Western Europe," *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 2 (2019): 592–610, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12328>.

The potential for fortifying democracy and fostering social justice lies within the collaboration between Muslims and various societal factions. The scholarly investigation conducted by Einat posits that establishing inter-ethnic and inter-religious alliances can fortify the political standing of Muslims within the local governance, particularly in nations where Muslims constitute a minority population.¹⁵ In light of comparable obstacles, disparate factions can converge in pursuit of a shared objective, engendering a society characterized by inclusivity and harmony.

In many cases, the challenges Muslims face are often similar to those faced by other minority groups, such as discrimination, stereotypes, and lack of representation in politics and the media.¹⁶ These groups can share resources, strategies, and support networks to overcome these barriers by working together. Such alliances benefit Muslims and society by promoting dialogue, understanding, and group cooperation.

Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that fostering collaboration among various groups can serve as a potent antidote to the prevailing polarisation and divisive rhetoric that frequently permeates public discourse. By espousing a comprehensive and verifiable discourse, the alliance can lessen the misapprehensions and apprehensions that often underpin unfavorable dispositions towards adherents of the Islamic faith and other marginalized communities.

Nevertheless, to fully realize the profound benefits of this collaborative endeavor, all parties involved must demonstrate an unwavering dedication to attentively listen, earnestly learn, and harmoniously work in unison. To effectively address this matter, it is imperative to adopt a proactive stance, which entails implementing various strategies, including but not limited to the

¹⁵ Jan, "The Political Influence of an Interest Group: A Comparative Study on the Muslim Minority in the United States and Britain."

¹⁶ Pew Research Center, "U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream," 2017, <https://doi.org/https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>.

regular convening of meetings, conducting joint training sessions, and organizing collaborative advocacy campaigns. In light of the multifaceted tapestry of our contemporary society, it becomes evident that the establishment of bridges and the cultivation of cooperation among various groups emerge as the quintessential elements for attaining a society characterized by harmony, inclusivity, and justice.

3. *Overcome Obstacles And Create Opportunities*

Muslims frequently encounter distinctive and intricate obstacles in local politics within non-Muslim majority nations. One of the most efficacious methodologies for surmounting these impediments is cultivating a network of bolsters and alliances. Based on the scholarly investigation conducted by Kyrchanoff, it has been observed that individuals adhering to the Islamic faith who possess robust and interconnected support systems exhibit a higher degree of achievement within the realm of politics, in contrast to their counterparts lacking such networks.¹⁷ The underlying justification for this proposition is readily apparent: support networks offer indispensable provisions, knowledge, instruction, and ethical encouragement to navigate the trials that may manifest themselves effectively.

In numerous instances, the challenges encountered by adherents of Islam in the realm of politics extend beyond mere structural impediments, encompassing intricate webs of social and cultural complexities. In political discourse and electoral dynamics, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential ramifications stemming from unfavorable perceptions or misconceptions surrounding the Islamic faith. When left unaddressed, such perceptions can significantly influence the treatment of Muslims by their political counterparts and the voting populace. In such circumstances, adherents of the Islamic faith must cultivate a robust support network. This network serves a twofold purpose: firstly, it equips Muslims with the necessary tools to respond to criticism well

¹⁷ M. Kyrchanoff, "Indonesian Islamism as a marginal case of the political Islam development in a Muslim country," *Shidnij Svit* 2021, no. 3 (2021): 107–22, <https://doi.org/10.15407/ORIENTW2021.03.107>.

and constructively. Secondly, it serves as a platform for disseminating success stories and celebrating the positive contributions that Muslims have made to society.

Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore the significance of forging alliances with like-minded groups with similar interests and objectives. Through the establishment of collaborative efforts with various groups, Muslims have the potential to augment their influence, foster the sharing of resources, and ultimately attain common objectives with enhanced efficacy. In addition to their inherent benefits for the Muslim community, these alliances are significant for society.¹⁸ They catalyze cooperation, facilitate dialogue, and nurture a more profound understanding among diverse groups.

Nevertheless, establishing and preserving support networks and alliances pose a formidable challenge. This endeavor necessitates unwavering commitment, dedication, and diligent exertion from all entities involved. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the advantages of a given situation significantly surpass the difficulties encountered. Through the establishment of robust support networks and the cultivation of fruitful alliances, adherents of the Islamic faith possess the capacity to surmount various impediments, exert a tangible impact on policy formulation, and guarantee the recognition and appreciation of their voices within the realm of political engagement. Henceforth, it is imperative for adherents of Islam who aspire to engage in politics within nations predominantly inhabited by non-Muslims to accord utmost importance to this strategic approach.

Education and training have shown to be highly productive tools for Muslims residing in non-Muslim majority nations to surmount political challenges. The involvement of young Muslims in politics has been shown to increase significantly due to specialized leadership training programs, as

¹⁸ van Slageren and van Tubergen, "Generalised Trust among Second-Generation Muslim and Non-Muslim Minority Groups in Europe."

indicated by the findings of a study by Chouhoud.¹⁹ The efficacy of this educational approach stems from its ability to provide individuals with essential competencies, information, and self-assurance required for active engagement in the democratic process. Furthermore, education enhances individuals' comprehension of the intricacies of the local political system, providing them with valuable insights into the mechanisms via which they might exert influence upon it. Therefore, it can be observed that education has played a significant part in enabling several individuals who identify as Muslims to attain leadership positions, surmount instances of prejudice, and foster connections with diverse populations. Investing in education and training enhances the Muslim community and enables harmonious integration and cohabitation within the broader society.

Establishing networks and collaborations with other organizations has emerged as a crucial approach Muslims employ to enhance their political influence within non-Muslim-majority nations. Boulos's study emphasizes the significance of partnerships between Muslim communities and human rights organizations, which have yielded policies with greater inclusivity and equity.²⁰ The rationale underlying the effectiveness of this technique is in the synergistic effects that arise when collectives sharing common objectives and values unite. Through collaborative efforts, individuals can enhance the impact of their voices, pool resources, and attain outcomes of greater magnitude than what could be accomplished in isolation. An illustration of successful collaborations can be observed in the coalitions formed between Muslim communities and human rights organizations in several nations, wherein they have effectively pushed for civil rights, religious freedom, and safeguards against discriminatory practices. Furthermore, this collaborative alliance also fosters the dissemination

¹⁹ Youssef Chouhoud, Karam Dana, and Matt Barreto, "American Muslim Political Participation: Between Diversity and Cohesion," *Politics and Religion* 12, no. 4 (2019): 736–45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048318000858>.

²⁰ Sonia Boulos, "Integrating Muslim Women Within European Societies: Muslim Human Rights Discourse and the Cross-Cultural Approach to Human Rights in Europe," *Studies in Global Justice* 18 (2019): 243–62, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05590-5_13.

of information and comprehension among various societies, fostering reciprocal tolerance and esteem. Hence, establishing cross-community collaborations and networks bolsters Muslims' local political influence and promotes the advancement of democratic principles and societal inclusivity.

In the contemporary digital epoch, media and technology have assumed a paramount role for Muslims residing in non-Muslim majority nations, serving as invaluable instruments to surmount prevailing stereotypes and augment their representation within the political domain. In a scholarly investigation conducted by Douglass, social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have facilitated the dissemination of Muslim narratives and perspectives to a broader audience, granting access to millions of individuals who were previously unable to engage with such accounts.²¹

The primary catalyst for the triumph of social media in bolstering the Muslim community lies in its remarkable capacity to furnish a virtual space wherein voices frequently relegated to the periphery are allowed to be heard and acknowledged.²² Historically, the portrayal of Muslims within mainstream media has frequently been characterized by limitations and biases. In light of the emergence of social media, it is noteworthy that each individual now possesses the capacity to assume the role of a broadcaster, thereby disseminating their narratives and exerting a discernible impact on the collective consciousness. It enables the Muslim community to assert agency over its history, thereby introducing intricacy and multiplicity to narratives frequently portrayed in a homogenous fashion.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that myriad prospects exist within social media and technology, yet they present a distinct array of obstacles

²¹ Caitlin H. Douglass et al., "Social Media and Online Digital Technology Use among Muslim Young People and Parents: Qualitative Focus Group Study," *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting* 5, no. 2 (2022): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.2196/36858>.

²² Anton Törnberg and Petter Törnberg, "Muslims in Social Media Discourse: Combining Topic Modeling and Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse, Context and Media* 13 (2016): 132–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2016.04.003>.

concurrently.²³ In the digital discourse realm, Muslims encounter many formidable obstacles, including but not limited to the dissemination of erroneous information, the propagation of vitriolic rhetoric, and the perpetuation of cyberattacks. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that numerous communities have adeptly employed technological advancements to counteract the pernicious influence of this unfavorable narrative.

Furthermore, many Muslim activists have effectively utilized social media platforms to advocate for causes that hold significant relevance within their communities.²⁴ By strategically utilizing hashtags and viral campaigns, they have garnered global recognition for bigotry, violence rooted in religious beliefs, and infringements upon human rights. These initiatives aim to increase community awareness and support, fostering solidarity with other marginalized groups experiencing prejudice and injustice. The utilization of media and technology has emerged as a significant measure for Muslims residing in non-Muslim majority countries to assert their presence, gain recognition, and garner esteem for their perspectives. The Muslim community has demonstrated its significant influence in the contemporary digital era by strategically managing its narratives, establishing online communities that assist, and effectively mobilizing support for their respective causes.

The predicaments encountered by Muslims residing in nations constituting a minority amidst a non-Muslim majority are undeniably genuine and frequently intricate. Nevertheless, several instances exist wherein these communities have successfully surmounted hurdles and forged avenues for progress. The keys to achieving success, as evidenced by several studies, encompass adaptation, creativity, education, partnerships, and the utilization of technology. Nevertheless, a notable aspect that may have been overlooked in the

²³ Jamal Abdul Nasir Ansari and Nawab Ali Khan, "Exploring the Role of Social Media in Collaborative Learning the New Domain of Learning [Explorando El Papel de Las Redes Sociales En El Aprendizaje Colaborativo El Nuevo Dominio Del Aprendizaje]," *Smart Learning Environments* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1–16.

²⁴ W. Ian O'Byrne, "Educate, Empower, Advocate: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in a Digital Society," *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 19, no. 4 (2019): 640–69.

preceding discourse is the resilience and togetherness exhibited within the Muslim community.

Within the confines of this particular context, resilience encompasses the capacity to withstand and endure various forms of pressure or challenges and the ability to rebound and progress in the face of adversity. Numerous Muslim communities across the globe have demonstrated remarkable fortitude when confronted with instances of discrimination, bias, and, frequently, acts of violence. These individuals have established various organizations, networks, and initiatives that assist their community members and generate beneficial societal outcomes.

Solidarity has emerged as a significant catalyst for numerous successful endeavors. The Muslim community has exhibited resilience, cohesion, and mutual assistance when facing challenging circumstances. The keys to success have been demonstrated through various means, such as raising cash for community projects, lobbying for civil rights, and supporting Muslim candidates in elections, all of which have fostered solidarity and collaboration.

The Muslim community has demonstrated perseverance, ingenuity, and tenacity to secure its representation inside the political sphere while encountering various challenges. Muslim individuals have employed diverse strategies, from educational initiatives to social media advocacy, to foster constructive transformations within their communities. These narratives offer optimism and motivation to individuals who struggle for equal rights and political representation, demonstrating that favorable changes can be achieved through perseverance, unity, and diligent efforts.

4. Community Responses to Muslim Involvement In Local Politics

The engagement of Muslims in municipal politics within countries where they constitute a minority population frequently elicits diverse reactions from the surrounding community. The perception above is predominantly shaped by

an individual's comprehension and consciousness of Islam and its political significance. Based on a study conducted by Hamid, the participation of Muslims in municipal politics has been identified as a factor contributing to social tensions in many European nations.²⁵ The primary catalyst for this tension is the idea that Muslims are endeavoring to introduce Islamic beliefs and standards into local politics. When a Muslim individual assumes the mayor or council member position, apprehensions may arise regarding adopting Sharia law or policies that align with Islamic principles.

Nevertheless, this view frequently stems from a lack of knowledge or misconceptions regarding Islam and the political objectives of Muslims. Many individuals engaged in political activities exhibit a profound dedication to the ideals of democracy and social justice, with their primary objective being the betterment of their society rather than the imposition of a particular ideology. Hence, everyone must learn about Islam and the societal contributions Muslims make to comprehend and value their involvement in local political affairs. To foster a more inclusive society, we must transcend stereotypes and evaluate individuals based on their achievements and contributions rather than making judgments solely based on their religious or ethnic affiliations.

Conversely, in several nations, the participation of Muslims in domestic political affairs indicates their integration and societal inclusion. This observation suggests that individuals' attitudes towards Muslims and their engagement in political matters are not uniformly unfavorable or characterized by apprehension. In nations such as Canada and Australia, renowned for their diversity policies, the participation of Muslims in local politics is frequently regarded as indicative of the efficacy of multiculturalism. A study conducted by Madoz shows that certain nations exhibit a societal inclination towards embracing variety, wherein the participation of Muslims in political affairs is

²⁵ Shadi Hamid, "The Role of Islam in European Populism: How Refugee Flows and Fear of Muslims Drive Right-Wing Support" (Washington, D.C, 2019).

perceived as an integral component of this diversity.²⁶ It is widely held that ensuring equitable chances for everyone to engage in the democratic process is vital, irrespective of their religious or ethnic affiliations. This perspective demonstrates broader inclusivity and a willingness to embrace diversity.

Nevertheless, the acceptance of this phenomenon has challenges. Despite being accepted at the societal level, Muslim politicians in these nations encounter obstacles in the shape of stereotypes and societal expectations. The primary focus is that countries like Canada and Australia are actively undertaking substantial initiatives to foster the integration of the Muslim minority within the broader society. This observation highlights the potential for individuals to transcend prejudice and recognize the significance and societal contributions of the Muslim community with the acquisition of comprehensive education and heightened understanding. Therefore, in nations of this nature, the participation of Muslims in domestic politics is regarded as a favorable development and a forward stride toward fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Despite the favorable reception of Muslim participation in domestic political affairs across various nations, it is imperative to acknowledge the persistent hurdles and difficulties Muslim politicians encounter, especially within ostensibly inclusive democracies. The favorable reception of Muslim engagement in municipal politics does not inherently imply that the journey toward complete inclusion lacks challenges. A study by Khan showed that Muslim politicians continue encountering institutional impediments despite societal acceptance.²⁷ Certain obstacles that may be encountered include

²⁶ Marion Maddox, "Political Participation of Muslims in Australia" (Sydney, 2010); Katherine Bullock and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "Becoming 'Holistically Indigenous': Young Muslims and Political Participation in Canada," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2013): 185–207, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.810116>; Naser Ghobadzaeh, "Multiculturalism and Muslim Women: Sharia Debate in Australia and Canada," *Canadian Political Science Association*, 2009, 1–29.

²⁷ Mohsin Hassan Khan et al., "Muslims' Representation in Donald Trump's Anti-Muslim-Islam Statement: A Critical Discourse Analysis," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020115>.

instances of prejudice during the process of candidacy or election, as well as an absence of backing from the dominant political party. This observation highlights a disparity between public acceptability and the prevailing power dynamics. Although there may be societal support for Muslim participation in politics, it is essential to acknowledge that existing power structures and political institutions may not be well-equipped to accommodate this shift. This observation highlights the distinction between societal acceptability and institutional integration. Hence, it is crucial to differentiate societal acceptability from institutional rejection. To attain complete integration, it is imperative to consider these two facets. The initial phase of social acceptance is of paramount significance, although it is essential to recognize that subsequent institutional transformation plays a pivotal role in the overall process. The lack of institutional modifications is a significant obstacle to Muslim politicians' complete engagement in municipal politics. Hence, nations must prioritize establishing inclusive political structures that effectively represent the entirety of their populace, encompassing the Muslim population as well.

The media plays a significant role in shaping individuals' reactions to the participation of Muslims in local politics. Due to its considerable influence in molding public sentiment, the media shapes societal perceptions and reactions toward Muslim engagement in political affairs. The impact of negative media portrayals of Islam and Muslims on public perception is substantial, as indicated by a study conducted by Saleem.²⁸ The media can depict specific narratives, and regrettably, it is often seen that the records surrounding Muslims tend to be unfavorable. For instance, when the media disseminates information regarding a Muslim politician who is under suspicion for potential affiliations with

²⁸ Muniba Saleem et al., "Exposure to Muslims in Media and Support for Public Policies Harming Muslims," *Communication Research* 44, no. 6 (August 2017): 841–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215619214>; Katharina Neumann, Florian Arendt, and Philip Baugut, "News and Islamist Radicalization Processes: Investigating Muslims' Perceptions of Negative News Coverage of Islam," *Mass Communication and Society* 21, no. 4 (2018): 498–523, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2018.1430832>; Nazita Lajevardi, "The Media Matters: Muslim American Portrayals and the Effects on Mass Attitudes," *Journal of Politics* 83, no. 3 (2021): 1060–79, <https://doi.org/10.1086/711300>.

extremist organizations, it has the potential to instill dread and distrust throughout the general populace. However, it is essential to note that these charges may lack veracity or be founded on tenuous evidence.

The influential role of the media in molding public perception should not be disregarded. In the contemporary era characterized by the proliferation of information, news dissemination occurs rapidly and extensively. Consequently, narratives constructed by the media frequently assume a dominant position inside society's collective consciousness. Hence, the media must engage in fair and balanced reporting. The potential consequences of inaccurate or biased reporting can be more significant than often acknowledged²⁹, particularly when considering the role of Muslims in local politics.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the burden of duty extends beyond the media alone. Communities should adopt a critical stance towards the information they consume while actively pursuing multiple sources of information to get a more comprehensive and precise understanding. By acquiring a deeper comprehension of the media's function and adopting a more discerning approach toward news consumption, individuals can contribute to the assurance that their assessments of Muslim participation in local politics are grounded in factual evidence rather than driven by fear or bias.

While it is acknowledged that a significant number of adverse reactions toward Muslim participation in local politics stem from ignorance or prejudice, it is imperative to recognize that not all unfavorable responses can be attributed to these factors. Indeed, valid worries can emerge from specific observations or experiences. In a study conducted by Hashemi, it was found that particular populations express apprehension regarding the potential utilization of political power by Muslim politicians to further specific agendas that may not be by the

²⁹ Mathieu Couttenier et al., "Anti-Muslim Voting and Media Coverage of Immigrant Crimes," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, December 2021, 1–33, https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_01152.

democratic or secular principles upheld by the nation.³⁰ There are a multitude of factors contributing to this worry. Certain civilizations may express apprehension towards potential external effects, such as assistance from other nations or extremist organizations. There exists concern among specific individuals regarding the possible inclination of Muslim politicians to prioritize policies that favor the Muslim community at the expense of other communities.³¹ Although these worries may stem from particular observations or experiences, it is crucial to avoid making sweeping generalizations about the entire community based on the behavior of a limited subset.

Nevertheless, clearly distinguishing between valid criticism and biased prejudice is crucial. To engage in a good critique of a specific politician or program, it is imperative to rely on objective data and analysis rather than resorting to preconceptions or bias. While individuals must exercise their right to express their worries or critiques, it is also imperative for them to ascertain that their perspectives are grounded in precise and impartial data. Open conversation and transparency play a crucial role in this particular context. Muslim politicians, similar to politicians of other backgrounds, must uphold transparency regarding their agenda and objectives. The public must be able to engage with them and pose inquiries. Engaging in open and courteous dialogue can foster a more comprehensive comprehension and effectively tackle any difficulties that may develop.

In summary, the public reaction to the participation of Muslims in domestic politics in nations where Muslims are not the majority is a multifaceted occurrence shaped by various circumstances. Various facets, including the media, education, social contacts, and individual perspectives, collectively contribute to the formation of societal responses and comprehension of the involvement of Muslims in local politics. The research

³⁰ Nader Hashemi, "Political Islam: A 40 Year Retrospective," *Religions* 12, no. 2 (2021): 130, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020130>.

³¹ Dancygier, "The Left and Minority Representation: The Labour Party, Muslim Candidates, and Inclusion Tradeoffs."

above indicates the existence of significant hurdles encountered by Muslim politicians. However, they also provide tangible prospects for enhanced comprehension and assimilation. In the contemporary epoch of globalization, individuals must understand and admire the multifariousness inherent within themselves. The engagement of Muslims in local politics encompasses more than mere representation and justice, as it also encompasses the objective of assuring the inclusion and recognition of all perspectives. To comprehensively understand society's responses to this involvement, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the various elements that exert effect on it and analyze their interplay.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that genuine individuals with genuine desires, concerns, and ambitions exist beneath every statistical data, research finding, or media portrayal. Each Muslim politician possesses a distinct narrative, making diverse contributions to their respective societies. Hence, it is crucial to comprehend overarching trends and patterns while acknowledging and comprehending unique experiences. By adopting a thorough and empirically grounded methodology, we may gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles encountered by Muslim individuals engaging in political activities inside nations where Muslims constitute a minority. This approach enables us to identify and tackle these issues effectively. By enhancing our comprehension, we may strive towards fostering a society that is both inclusive and democratic, wherein every individual, irrespective of their religious or ethnic affiliations, can actively engage and contribute.

Conclusion

The question of Muslim involvement in municipal politics within countries where the majority population is non-Muslim is frequently regarded as intriguing and contentious. Muslim individuals often adopt a proactive and deliberate approach, seeking opportunities for integration while upholding their Islamic identity. This phenomenon can be attributed to the aspiration for

inclusivity in the decision-making realm and the imperative to safeguard the civil liberties of individuals as members of society—nevertheless, the complexities surrounding the political participation of Muslims at the local level present significant problems. Individuals belonging to minority groups may encounter instances of prejudice, discrimination, or a lack of trust from specific segments of the dominant culture. However, some individuals adhering to the Islamic faith have successfully surmounted these obstacles by establishing support networks, cooperating with other collectives, and implementing proficient communication tactics. Hence, the participation of Muslims in regional politics encompasses not solely the aspect of representation but also entails the establishment of connections and the promotion of mutual comprehension among various communities.

The local community's reactions to the participation of Muslims in local politics exhibit a range of responses, which are frequently shaped by their perceptions and comprehension of Islam and the Muslim community. The influence of mass media and popular narratives on public perceptions is commonly observed, with instances when unfavorable stereotypes are reinforced. Nevertheless, it has been seen that in numerous contexts, when individuals are afforded the chance to interact directly with Muslim officials and witness their constructive contributions, the ensuing reaction tends to be more favorable. It exemplifies the significance of education and interfaith discourse in fostering comprehension and acceptance. Furthermore, Muslims' active and affirmative engagement in local politics can serve as a potent mechanism for challenging unfavorable narratives and promoting principles of diversity and inclusivity. Hence, although Muslims encounter genuine obstacles in local politics, they also possess the potential to enact constructive transformations and foster a more comprehensive societal framework.

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