

Unpacking the Salience of Islamophobia in a Classroom-Canadian Context

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Abstract

The National Council of Canadian Muslims released statistics at the Islamophobia Summit on July 22, 2021, reporting “more Muslims have been killed in targeted hate-attacks in Canada than any other G-7 country in the past five years because of Islamophobia” (NCCM, 2021). After the multiple reported Islamophobic attacks this past Summer of 2021, Muslim youth yearn for spaces where they are free to be themselves and do not have to worry about Islamophobia, especially from their universities. Muslims face specific challenges related to their adherence to Islam, which they may require support for from their respective schools (Rezai-Rashti, 1994; Zine, 2001; Sisak, 2015; Nuttall, 2016). In Canada, Islam and Muslims are perceived as strange and different by over 50% of the population (Environics, 2016). One of the challenges Muslim students face is experiencing Islamophobia in their schools and universities. There have been numerous definitions of Islamophobia, but the definition that is used most commonly is “the dread, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims, perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims” (Runnymede Trust Commission, 1997). I utilized semi-structured interviews with 32 participants, including students, teachers, parents, administrators, and the local Imam of the city. In this paper, I explore the many faces of Islamophobia that Muslim students face during interactions with their teachers.

Keywords: Muslim, Islamophobia, Classroom, Canada, Islam