



BULLYING OF MUSLIM YOUTH

A Review of Research & Recommendations



AUTHORS

and acknowledgements

Authors:

Madiha Tahseen, Ph.D is a Research Fellow, Community Educator and the Research Translation Manager at The Family and Youth Institute (FYI). She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Developmental Psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Her research interests include individual and group identity development, parenting, acculturation, and risk and protective factors of Muslim adolescents' healthy development.

Sameera Ahmed, Ph.D. is the Director of The Family and Youth Institute. She holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She also serves as an Associate Editor for the Journal of Muslim Mental Health, and has a private clinical practice in Canton, MI. Her areas of interest include: risk behaviors and protective factors of Muslim adolescents and young adults; promoting culturally and religiously meaningful psychotherapy; and skills-based parenting and marital interventions to strengthen families.

Sawssan Ahmed, Ph.D. serves as a Research Associate and Community Educator at The Family and Youth Institute. She completed her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Wayne State University. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at California State University, Fullerton and is a Clinical Psychologist at Sidra Medicine. Dr. Ahmed is also a licensed psychologist in the state of California and the country of Qatar. Her research focuses on the role of socio-cultural risk and protective factors in physical and mental health, with a special interest in Arab-Americans, adolescents, and refugees.

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ABOUT

The Family and Youth Institute



About:

The Family and Youth Institute is a not for profit, 501(c)3 research and education institute that was formed in 2006. We strengthen and empower individuals, families, and communities through research and education efforts that promote: positive youth development, healthy marriages, effective parenting, and mental health and well being.

What we do:

The FYI is about finding solutions to issues we struggle within our families. We do this by understanding the depth of the challenges through research and providing research-based solutions.

Research

We conduct research strengthening individuals and their families. We take a community based participatory research approach in an attempt to address community concerns. Our research is presented at professional conferences and published in peer-reviewed publications.

Education

While research is key to extending our knowledge, it is through community education efforts that the research is put into action. Our educational tools (presentations, workshops, webinars, infographics, videos, toolkits, reports, articles, etc) integrates research, clinical, and community-based experience. They are specially tailored to meet the needs of different audiences.

Research *issues*

Educate *individuals*

Empower *communities*

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The FYI's Bullying Prevention Infographic



“They call me terrorist and when I get frustrated they say ‘you’re going to bomb us’ and laugh.”

(CAIR, 2017b)



Introduction:

Due to an increasingly divisive socio-political climate, bullying of American Muslim children and adolescents is on the rise and occurs across various contexts within their lives. The pervasiveness of bullying places American Muslim children at risk for poor mental health and development, and increased engagement in risk behaviors. They also face challenges integrating into larger societal structures due to public devaluation of Islam and their minority status (Sirin & Fine, 2008). These challenges create an atmosphere in which American Muslim children and adolescents may feel misunderstood and isolated in different settings in their lives. They are often hard-pressed to understand the anti-Muslim sentiment in the broader geopolitical setting and feel powerless as agents of change, which can have drastic effects on their outcomes (Britto, 2008).



Given the challenges that American Muslim youth face, it is imperative to intervene from multiple avenues to buffer the impact of bullying and harassment. There is a growing recognition that those interested in supporting American Muslim youth development are often not equipped to provide the support that they need. To address this gap, this report (1) summarizes the research findings on bullying experiences of American Muslim children and (2) briefly provides recommendations and strategies for supporting their development. [Note: The usage of the term children refers to American Muslim children and adolescents unless otherwise noted.]



The Role of Context:

Children do not grow up in a bubble--rather, they experience development and growth amidst the interaction of many systems and contexts in their lives (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). In order to understand the experiences and impact of bullying on American Muslim children, it is necessary to first recognize the perception of Muslims in broader contexts. Surveys from various polling organizations show that significant numbers of Americans view Islam and Muslims negatively. About half (49%) of Americans think some U.S. Muslims are anti-American, and a quarter (24%) think American Muslims support extremism (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Alarming, in data collected between 2007 and 2009, even among Americans who reported no personal prejudice towards Muslims, a third (36%) still reported having an unfavorable opinion about Islam (Gallup Poll, 2011). These findings are troubling because it suggests that even if Americans do not hold prejudices about Muslims as people, they still view the religion negatively.



Anti-Muslim sentiment has resulted in increased reports of hate and discrimination, particularly after the presidential election in November, 2016 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). In fact, based on an analysis of hate crimes reported to the FBI, the number of assaults in 2015 and 2016 surpass the peak that occurred in 2001 after the events of 9/11 (Pew Research Center, 2017).

There was a 19% increase in reported anti-Muslim hate crimes from 2015 to 2016, including increases in anti-Muslim intimidation and crimes that damage or destroy property, (i.e. vandalism of mosques, schools, Muslim centers). Violent incidents have also been reported, such as murders of Muslim individuals in broad daylight, bombings of mosques, and shooting and killing of Muslim worshippers during prayer (CAIR, 2017a).



About half of American Muslims report that it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S.

(Pew Research Center, 2017)

Religious discrimination was reported by 60% to 75% of American Muslims surveyed, with Muslim women and young people experiencing discrimination most frequently (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). About half of American Muslims report that it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S. in recent years, and about a quarter view discrimination and racism as the most important problem facing American Muslims (Pew Research Center, 2017).

With rising anti-Muslim sentiment, the religiously-based acts of discrimination against Muslim adults permeate into the lives of Muslim children. Although harassment based on one's religion is considered discrimination, many children, parents, and educators often refer to it as bullying.

Bullying of Muslim Children

American Muslim children are increasingly experiencing identity-based bullying and harassment. Muslim parents are four times as likely as the general public to report that their school-aged children have been bullied (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). A bullying survey of Muslim adolescents in California finds that 53% of Muslim students have experienced religiously-based bullying in school—nearly twice the national average of bullying (CAIR, 2017b). However, Muslim youth are a diverse group and vary in their racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds (Ahmed, Patel & Hashem, 2015).

In this section, we review the (1) various forms of bullying experienced by Muslim children, (2) sources of perpetrators of the bullying, and (3) different contexts within which discrimination occurs.



What Does Bullying Look Like?

Research indicates that Muslim children experience bullying in various direct and indirect forms (Houry & Sullivan, 2016). Verbal bullying was reported by 52% of adolescents and was the most common form of harassment reported (CAIR, 2015). Common themes include: (1) accusations of being affiliated with terrorism (2) derogatory comments about their religious practices or beliefs; and (3) statements which perpetuate negative stereotypes about Islam (Bonet, 2011; CAIR, 2017b; El-Hajj, 2007; Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008).

Common themes of verbal bullying:

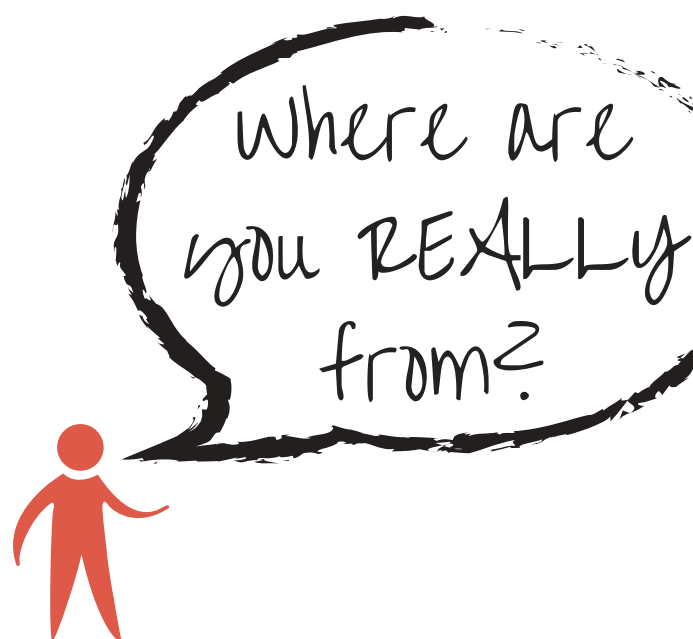
- Accusations of being affiliated with terrorism
- Derogatory comments about their religious practices or beliefs
- Statements which perpetuate negative stereotypes about Islam

(Bonet, 2011; CAIR, 2017b; El-Hajj, 2007; Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008)

Unfortunately, physical bullying is also on the rise. For instance, from 2014 to 2017, rates of Muslim adolescents reporting physical harassment and assault jumped from 9% to 19% (CAIR, 2017b). Noted examples include: group of boys harassing Muslim girls with physical gestures at a mall; pulling headscarves off Muslim girls, physically assaulting Muslim children (Aroian, 2012; CAIR, 2017b; Wingfield, 2006).

→ Microaggressions

Muslim children are also the victims of indirect forms of bullying, or microaggressions--brief and everyday slights or insults that communicate negative messages towards individuals of color and may or may not be intentional (Sue, 2010). Different forms of microaggressions against Muslims include (1) asking Muslim children questions such as, 'Where are you really from?', and (2) misinformation and misrepresentation in the school curriculum content that portray Islam and Muslims as inherently villainous (Wingfield & Karaman, 1995), and in direct conflict with western civilization.



In reality, Muslims have contributed heavily to the building of America. Historical contributions began prior to the inception of America. African Muslims were forced into enslavement to help build the American economy and infrastructure; they were enlisted American soldiers in all major wars (including the Revolutionary war); and more recently many were active in the civil rights movements (Diouf, 2013; Muhammad, 2013). These contributions, as well as contributions to history, science, and the arts, are largely ignored in the classroom.

Microaggressions may also include school practices or policies that fail to accommodate Muslim students, such as the lack of support for Muslim student organizations, requiring fasting Muslim students to participate in strenuous physical activities during Ramadan, or the subtle exclusion of non-Christian holidays on school calendars (Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015). Although subtle in nature, microaggressions can similarly impact Muslim children's mental health, academic performance and school engagement, as they do for adjustment outcomes among other minority youth (e.g., Huynh, Devos, & Dunbar, 2012), which will be further discussed in a subsequent section.

One Muslim parent explained that her son felt embarrassed when a student teacher explained to the class, in reference to the Kaaba, that Muslims worship idols.

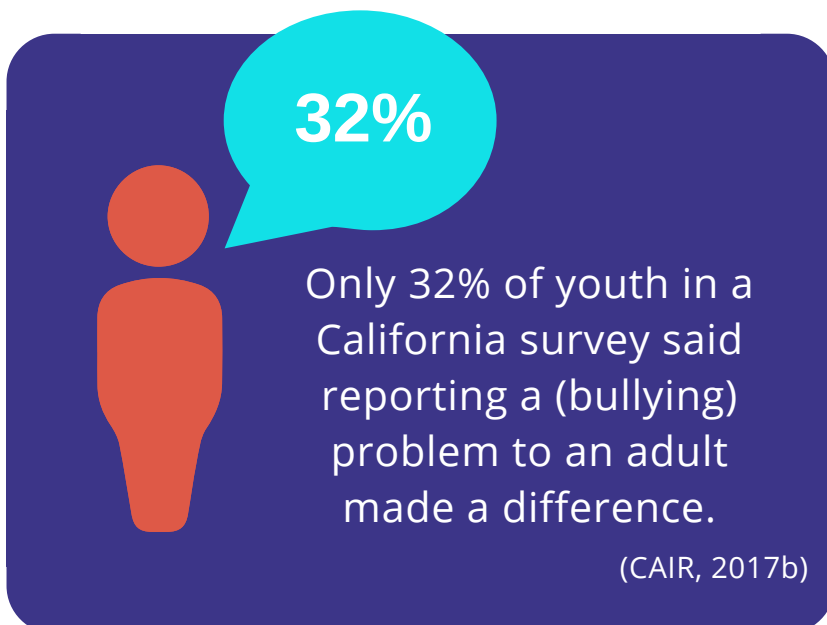


(Sabry & Bruna, 2007)

Who are the Perpetrators of Bullying?

Muslim children are being bullied by both peers and adults in their daily lives. Consistent with the bullying experiences of non-Muslim children (Olweus & Limber, 2010), Muslim children are bullied by their peers in both direct and indirect forms (Abu El-Haj, 2010; Aroian, 2012; Bonet, 2011; Dupper et al., 2015). Unfortunately, adults are also perpetrators. Within the schooling environment, school staff members (i.e. teachers, coaches, school administrators) engage in verbal (e.g., "This is the region of the peace haters") and physical acts of discrimination (e.g., choking Muslim kindergartner until another adult intervenes) (Abu El-Hajj, 2007; Aroian, 2012; Bajaj, Ghaffar-Kucher, Desai, 2016; Dupper et al., 2015; Sabry & Bruna, 2007; Seward & Khan, 2016; Wingfield, 2006; see Table 1). In a survey of California Muslim students, 38% of the bullying incidents involved a teacher or school official, up from 20% in 2014 (CAIR, 2017b).

Girls wearing hijab reporting the highest level of discrimination by an adult (27%). Coaches may penalize students for missing practice for religious holidays or commitment. Some educators did not intervene when peers bullied Muslim students (Aroian, 2012). This is contrary to what typically occurs in schools where teachers tend to serve as mediators during peer acts of bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010). When teachers or school staff intentionally or unintentionally allow bullying under their supervision, they are sending messages of rejection and fear to Muslim students. This, in turn undermines Muslim students' sense of trust and safety in the student-teacher relationship. Condoning Muslim-based bullying also sends the message to onlooking peers that acts of bullying are permissible and indirectly encourages them to recur in the future.



As a result, only 32% of youth in a California survey said reporting a problem to an adult made a difference, down from 42% in 2014 (CAIR, 2017b). Many Muslim students worry that reporting an incident may actually worsen the situation at school and hence fail to report incidents (Seward & Khan, 2016).

These underlying tensions between Muslim students, school staff and educators disproportionately shifts the power dynamics in the relationship between students and adults in the school setting. Muslim students may no longer trust that the adults in their schools will be there to provide protection, which can be more devastating and developmentally destructive than peer bullying (McEvoy, 2005).

The impact has been likened to that of a parent or guardian engaging in emotional abuse (Dupper et al., 2015). These findings are troubling as they suggest that Muslim children may be experiencing increased vulnerability and decreased sources of support and coping.

Many Muslim students worry that reporting an incident may actually worsen the situation at school and hence fail to report incidents.

(Seward & Khan, 2016)

➔ Muslim Perpetrators

Sadly, American Muslim children also experience bullying from other Muslim children, a process termed intra-group bullying. Although there is no research on this phenomenon among Muslim children, other research shows that this process does occur among minorities and impacts their outcomes, such as their identity development (for a review, see Simon, Aufderheide, & Kampmeier, 2001). In the face of identity threats from the outgroup, ingroup members often reaffirm what it means to be a group member (Jetten, Summerville, Hornsey, & Mewse, 2005). So, as Muslim children experience threats to their identity from those external to their social groups (i.e. media, non-Muslim peers or adults), they may reaffirm what it means to be Muslim and discriminate against those who don't match their definition of Muslim, such as Muslim youth who engage in risky behaviors that are not accepted in Muslim circles (i.e. premarital dating, substance use) or Muslim youth from different racial groups (e.g., South-Asian versus Black Muslim).

Where Does It Happen?

Bullying of Muslim children is not isolated to one setting and actually occurs in different contexts. In school environments, Muslim children experience bullying while under adult supervision in the classroom (by both teachers and peers alike), in the cafeteria in the presence of lunch monitors, on the athletic field, and in afterschool programs (Dupper et al., 2015). Bullying also occurs in unsupervised settings, such as in school hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms, and while riding the school bus. For example, a 7th grader called a 6th grade Muslim student “the son of ISIS,” then threatened to shoot and kill him (Washington Post, 2015).



The occurrence of bullying during unsupervised times is particularly problematic because there is greater risk for escalation without the presence of adults who can step in and intervene.

Muslim children also experience harassment outside of school and from complete strangers (e.g., Muslim girls receiving dirty looks; being called “Dirty Arabs”; Aroian, 2012). A young girl recalls that she was driving with her mother and both were wearing headscarves:

A car full of teenage boys passed and made obscene hand gestures at them. When the car passed a second time, the boys rolled down the window and yelled verbal epithets about Muslims...The girls in the study unanimously agreed that they felt sad when people were angry and hateful toward them.

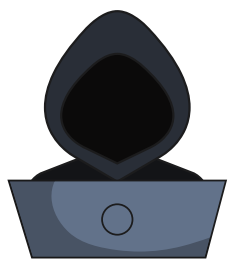


(Aroian, 2012)

Consequently, as Muslim children move between various social settings in their lives (i.e. shopping malls, movie theatres, after-school activities), they may worry and feel unsafe due to fearing unexpected discriminatory incidents.



Cyberbullying



The online world is equally unsafe for Muslim children. They are experiencing anti-Muslim cyberbullying, which refers to posting or sending electronic messages through varying forms of social media, with the intent to harass another individual (Awan, 2014; Bajaj et al., 2016). From 2014 to 2017, rates of California Muslim students who reported being victims of cyberbullying jumped from 19% to 26%.

In addition, more than half (57%) also report viewing their peers making offensive online posts about Islam or Muslims. Muslim children often do not report these offenses to adults because they do not feel doing so would make a difference (CAIR, 2017b).

Media



Another important context in which Muslim children experience bullying is through their exposure to negative rhetoric and attitudes of hate directed towards Islam and Muslims (i.e. Islamophobia) perpetuated by the media. Even if Muslim children have not directly experienced Muslim-based bullying, the perception of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric in the media can mimic the impact of direct experiences of discrimination (Steele, 2010; Taylor, Ruggiero, & Louis, 1996).

Similarly, Muslim youth also encounter vicarious discrimination, which are discriminatory experiences directed at other same-religion peers and adults in the adolescents' life (McKown & Quintana, 2008), particularly online as cited previously. Thus, it is also important to consider the secondary impact of media's messaging on Muslim children.

The research findings in this section highlight the different forms, sources, and contexts in which American Muslim children experience bullying/discrimination. It is important to note that preliminary findings show that the extent of discriminatory experiences of Muslim children may also vary by ethnic or racial group, thereby making some subgroups more vulnerable than others (Ahmed, Abu-Ras, Arfken, 2013). Thus, it is imperative to use an intersectional approach when dealing with children who navigate multiple identities.

In the following sections, the impact of these bullying experiences on Muslim children's development will be discussed.

"I've just blocked that day out. All I can remember was walking down the hall and hearing a boy yell, 'The Mozlems are gonna be rounded up now!' Then kids started snickering and chanting, 'Make America great again!' I didn't look up, I just ran and hid in the bathroom before anyone could see me cry. No one came to help me. No one told them to stop. No one did anything about it. I don't feel safe there (at school). You can't make me go back there."

(Male Student, 9th grade, personal communication)

The Impact of Bullying on Muslim Children's Healthy Outcomes

Bullying is having a detrimental impact on Muslim children, from their mental health to school success and community empowerment. Although this body of research is growing for Muslim populations, the current findings uncover similarly negative effects of bullying on Muslim adolescents' outcomes compared to their same-age counterparts. In the following section, the impact of bullying on adolescents' (1) mental health, (2) identity development, (3) civic engagement, and (4) academic engagement will be discussed.

In this section, we will discuss the impact of bullying on adolescent's:



Mental Health



Identity Development



Civic Engagement



Academic Engagement



Mental Health

Discrimination and identity-based bullying has been found to increase symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as other internalizing (e.g. “I cry a lot”) and externalizing (e.g. “I get in many fights”) behaviors among Muslim adolescents (Ahmed, Kia-Keating, & Tsai, 2011; Aroian, 2012; Dabbagh, Johnon, King, Blizzard, 2012; Sirin & Fine, 2008). Hostility from peers and adults may contribute to Muslim adolescents internalizing anti-Muslim hate and questioning their self-worth (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Muslim adolescents become conscious of being constantly watched by peers, teachers, other adults, and the larger community (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Engaging in this constant social vigilance may result in tremendous internal conflict, as they waffle between ignoring anti-Muslim acts for fear of validating them and feeling guilty about not reacting and perpetuating further acts. This may become a vicious cycle such that internal conflict leads youth to blame themselves, and to isolate themselves from other students in school, which may contribute to higher levels of depression and anxiety (Britto, 2008; Sirin & Fine, 2008).



Muslim adolescents state they often fail to report bullying incidents for fear of possible retribution (Aroian, 2012), which may contribute to feelings of helplessness and loneliness, and decreased source of support (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005). Muslim adolescents are less likely to divulge instances of bullying to their parents out of a need to protect them, which may result in increased psychological stress for these adolescents (Aroian, 2012). In this way, the experience of rejection, ridicule, and isolation from both peers and adult may result in poor mental health outcomes for Muslim adolescents exposed to bullying and discrimination.



Identity Development

“I didn’t understand what side you’re supposed to be on or anything. Like, you know, on one hand, you’re Muslim, and they’re saying, ‘You’re Muslim, go this way’; on the other hand, you’re American, and you have to be like this. Like, if you go to the American side, they’re never going to think of you as American, but if you go to the Muslim side, you’re not Muslim enough.”

(Marina, 17-year-old girl; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015)

The othering process refers to how various systems espouse cultural norms and laws which perpetuate the notion that all Muslims are aliens to American culture (Jamal, 2008). Muslim identity has been referred to as “identity formation under siege”, due to the othering of Islam and Muslims in legal policies, media dialogue, and educational institutions (Haque, 2004; Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Despite the developmental need to belong and be connected to society, Muslim adolescents receive direct and indirect messages of rejection from their environment (media, society, school, teachers, peers, etc.), thereby impacting their identity development (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Adolescents’ ability to cope with bullying and discrimination is dependent on individual traits, developmental context, and the interaction between these factors in their environment (Ahmed et al., 2015). For some adolescents, their Muslim identity serves as a protective factor in the face of bullying and discrimination (Bigelow, 2008; Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, & Flanagan, 2008; Cheah, Tahseen, & Balkaya, 2017).



As a coping strategy, these adolescents often engage in various identity enhancing actions, such as wearing hijab (a religious marker) or speaking out against stereotypes or misinformation about Islam in an attempt to portray Islam in a positive light, and to show signs of solidarity with fellow Muslims (Seward & Khan, 2016; van Driel, 2004). Such actions may serve to channel their energy, while fostering religious supports and sense of belonging with other Muslims to buffer the impact of psychological distress from discriminatory experiences on their developmental outcomes (Ahmed et al., 2011; Haslam et al., 2005; Khanlou et al., 2008).

On the other hand, some Muslim adolescents endorse lower levels of Muslim identity in the face of experiences with discrimination (Kumar, Warnke, & Karabenick, 2014). Muslim youth who accept discrimination as a “fact of life” report higher levels of anxiety and depression (Sirin & Fine, 2007) and feel unable to use their identity as a coping strategy. They may fear potential negative responses from teachers and friends (Aroian, 2012; Hutnik & Street, 2010) or feel ashamed about exerting their religious or cultural identity (Basford, 2010). As these youth experience self-hate, they may try to blend into dominant culture with respect to adolescent norms and behaviors (dress, values, leisure activities). This attempt at assimilation may result in becoming ostracized from their religious and cultural support groups, which can in turn increase the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2015; Basford, 2010).



It's just the way it is...

Muslim youth who accept discrimination as a “fact of life” report higher levels of anxiety and depression and feel unable to use their identity as a coping strategy.

(Sirin & Fine, 2007)



Civic Engagement

Children “learn what it means to be a citizen through everyday experiences of membership in their communities and opportunities to exercise rights and fulfill obligations” (Wray-Lake et al., 2008; p. 85). Despite experiences with discrimination, majority of Muslim youth endorse overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards all conventional forms of American civic and political participation (Cristillo, 2008).

In a large study of Muslim students in New York City schools, 90% of students reported that civic and political engagement were important--efforts ranging from involvement in community service to walking with others in marches. These rates were comparable to their non-Muslim counterparts in the study (Cristillo, 2008). Interestingly, perceived discrimination sometimes bolsters community engagement for young Muslim women. In these cases, young women may choose to engage with the very communities that placed them "under siege" in an attempt to fight back against stereotypes and discrimination (Sirin & Katsiaficas, 2011). It is important to note that although this study was on emerging adults, these findings show that negative experiences can be buffered by protective factors in later developmental stages.



90% of students reported that civic and political engagement were important to them.

(Cristillo, 2008)

"I was on the school bus and this...random guy... he was like 'Go back to your country you f-ing Afghan'... I felt horrible, I felt really bad, I mean I was only in 7th grade, what am I going to do?...I felt that, I mean how ignorant American society is, [and] at the same time why do they have a wrong image of us? And I wish that... all Muslims including me could stand up, because I think that then we can really show America that we're not a bad religion. We don't teach violence; we teach tolerance."



(Female Muslim Student, Seward & Khan, 2016)

Preliminary research also highlights that bullying experiences can result in the civic marginalization of Muslim youth (Wingfield, 2006). If Muslim youth experience harassment and constant attacks on their Muslim identities, then they are more likely to feel distanced from their American identity which may impact their civic contribution (Bonet, 2011). Such feelings of exclusion may result in reduced civic participation and little concern with local social issues.



Academic Engagement

Research on the negative impact of discrimination and bullying on the academic lives of Muslim children is also emerging. Experiences with bullying in the broader school environment hinders Muslim children's academic engagement. The existence of anti-Muslim stereotypes in some school climates prevents students from feeling understood, safe, or included at school (Basford, 2010). In fact, Muslim students report lower levels of feeling welcome and respected in school (69%) compared to previous years (83% in 2014) (CAIR, 2017b). In addition, Muslim students have a hard time reconciling their self-image with the negative portrayal of Islam in curriculum materials (Nieto, 2000; Suleiman, 2001). Indeed, findings show negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims in school curriculum results in negative self-perceptions among Muslim students, which in turn results in lower levels of GPA (Tabbah, Chung, & Miranda, 2016).

A Muslim student recalled how a Social Studies teacher who was talking about the Middle East once said, "This is the region of peace haters." This greatly embarrassed the student and he began fearing that his non-Muslim peers would have the same "peace-hating" impression of him.

(Sabry & Bruna, 2007)

Muslim students also report that prejudiced views held by school staff and peers undermined academic success and resulted in difficulties maintaining their religious and cultural identity (Basford, 2010), which in turn, was associated with decreased academic performance. In addition, Muslim students were more likely to be disrespected in class by both peers and adults, and get in trouble (in and out of school) (Basford, 2010). However, when Muslim students perceived equal treatment of all students, regardless of religious background, school environment served as a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination (Baysu, Celeste, Brown, Verschueren & Phalet, 2016).



Recommendations

Muslim children experience various forms of bullying and discrimination from different perpetrators and within varying contexts. Thus, it is imperative that prevention and intervention efforts address different aspects of children’s lives. In the following section, we provide recommendations for families, communities, educators, policymakers, and researchers, in order to foster positive outcomes for Muslim children.

In this section you will find recommendations for:



Families



Schools



Communities



Policy Makers



Researchers



Families

Muslim families can support their children in the following ways:

- Be aware of the signs of bullying or discrimination experienced by children. Do not minimize their experiences or blame them for being overly sensitive. Work on developing an open relationship with children so that they feel comfortable sharing their experiences with bullying.



This information and more can be found in the FYI Bullying toolkit (<http://www.thefyi.org/toolkits/youth-support-tool-kit/>).

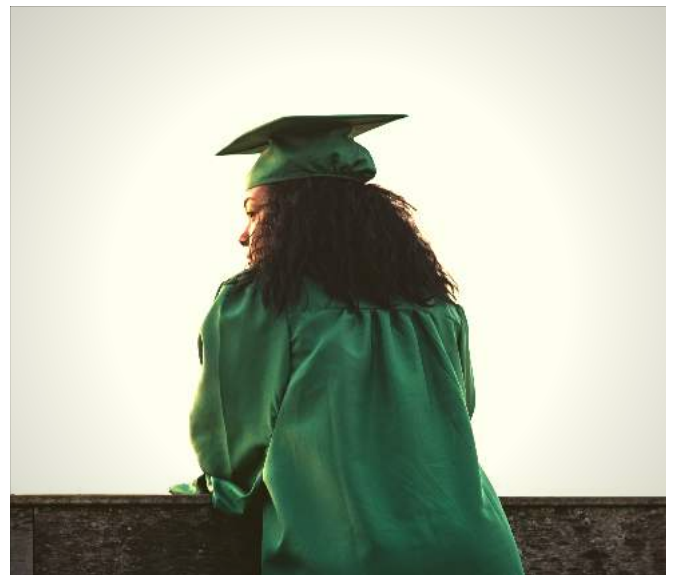
- Foster a strong relationship with children's school and connect with local organizations to advocate for children (Wingfield, 2006). For example, parents can advocate for curriculum revisions to remove biased materials or support students' attempts to initiate a Muslim Student Association.
- Increase children's access to religious support systems and support their ethnic and religious identities (Hill & Pargamet, 2003) by:
 - Encouraging their participation and volunteering in youth-centered religious community activities.
 - Listening to them as they talk about their struggles in practicing Islam, without jumping to correct them.
 - Ensuring that they have access to mentors and peers that they can talk to and use for support.
 - Supporting their personalized religious or spiritual practices (e.g, some Muslim students turned to prayer outside of the regular five prayers or listened to the Qur'an to deal with stress (Cristillo, 2008).
- Report incidents of bullying to the school, local CAIR chapter, and Southern Poverty Law Center to increase accurate estimates of bullying among Muslims.



Schools

Schools can engage in the following prevention and intervention efforts to support Muslim students:

- Anti-bullying programs in schools need to incorporate identity-based bullying & discrimination and explicitly mention protected groups in the school's bullying policy.
- Staff training and procedures should ensure that adults and students are prepared to recognize and respond appropriately to bullying of students because of their religion or ethnicity (Houri & Sullivan, 2016). Refer to the FYI webinars in the Resources Section for more information.
- Education should be offered to increase staff, student and parents' knowledge about Muslim students' religion and culture to increase religious tolerance and culturally responsive school environments (Haboush, 2007; Houry & Sullivan, 2016). This training should include a discussion about the intersectionality of Muslim students' various cultural, racial, and religious identities which can result in unique bullying experiences.



- Objective and specific tracking of bullying towards specific religious and ethnic groups to obtain group-specific rates of bullying.
- School psychologists and counselors should work with Muslim students to help them recognize the effects of discrimination on their identities and identify ways to deal with their struggles in a proactive manner. School counselors can also help Muslim students form alliances with individuals and groups that share similar interests as their own (Seward & Khan, 2016).



Communities

Muslim children are connected to many kinds of communities, such as mosques, youth groups, after-school programs, and alternative safe spaces. Youth programming efforts within each of these communities must create opportunities for young people to develop and cultivate meaningful and healthy relationships and experiences, which help them cope with their bullying experiences (Ahmed et al., 2015).

To do so, communities should:

- Conduct workshops on bullying prevention and coping with discrimination for both parents and children. These programs should help participants identify bullying, know their rights in schools, know what actions can be taken, and how to handle these experiences on a practical level.
- Collaborate with schools to provide resources on Islam and Muslims to increase cultural competency of teachers, students and other parents (Duncan & King, 2015; Houri & Sullivan, 2016), in the form of presentations at schools or disseminating materials to promote cultural awareness.
- Organizations should strive to develop an internal culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and empowering for young people of varying levels of religiosity, ethnicity/race, gender, and socioeconomic background (Ahmed et al., 2015). Provide programming that integrates awareness and appreciation of the intersectionality of racial, cultural, and religious identities among all children and youth within the community.
- Create mentoring programs for American Muslim youth to enhance their religious and cultural identities and practice how to handle bullying/discriminatory incidents. Mentoring programs should provide caring



adults guiding, mentoring, and creating opportunities to apply their skills in meaningful ways through projects serving their peers, religious community, neighborhood, or the wider community (Ahmed et al., 2015).

- Provide physically and emotionally safe places for children to socialize and engage in meaningful leisure activities which can promote social connection and youth development (Ahmed & Ezzedine 2009).
- Create opportunities for interfaith efforts that (1) expose youth to positive experiences with people of other faiths, and (2) allow them to advocate for their religious identity and beliefs, which can be therapeutic after experiencing discrimination (Cristillo, 2008).



Policy Makers

Policymakers should lobby for the following changes to policies and reporting practices:

- Amend Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion. Currently, the Office of Civil Rights only investigates acts in which religious discrimination intersects with racial/ethnic, national origin, or sex discrimination (Marcus, 2004). The inclusion of religious-based acts will allow victims to seek reparation against schools who receive federal funding and increase accountability for failure to address religious-based bullying (CAIR, 2017b).
- Expand the definition of bullying by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) from incidents in which one's religion is explicitly stated (e.g., "Bad Muslim boy") to include those incidents when it is non-explicit, but implied by the aggressor (e.g., "Go back to where you came from"). The exclusion of such acts makes it more difficult to decipher the prevalence and impact of microaggressions from current federal data.
- Demographic information of the victim must be included in various reporting mechanisms of bullying incidents at different levels of the government. The exclusion of such information confounds issues of race, ethnicity, and religion in the currently reported prevalence rates of bullying.
- Introduce new laws to protect students from adult-based bullying in school contexts. Although the developmental impact on the student is often similar to that of a parent/guardian who emotionally abuses his/her child, current state laws do not protect students from teacher abuse in the school setting (McEvoy, 2005).





Researchers

Though research findings highlighted in this report provide insight into the impact of bullying and discrimination on Muslim children, much more research is needed. Future research should consider the following:



- Large-scale empirical studies of Muslim children and adolescents' experiences with bullying, including microaggressions, using nationally representative samples.
 - Longitudinal studies using quantitative methods that explore the underlying processes and mechanisms of bullying, as well as the long-term impact of their experiences on developmental outcomes.
 - Research on protective factors within various micro and macro systems, as well as examinations of effectiveness to mitigate negative effects of bullying.
- Explore the role of the intersectionality on adolescent's various identities (race/ethnicity, SES, religiosity, neighborhood setting) on their bullying experiences and related outcomes.

Conclusion

"I am proud of my religion, but that is a lot of pressure, to try to present it and get everything right in front of everyone."

(Dupper et al, 2015)

In all aspects of their daily lives, American Muslim children face direct and indirect forms of bullying from adults and peers alike. Although the pervasive nature of these bullying experiences potentially places them at risk for poor outcomes, there are many protective factors that may buffer them from the impact of bullying. Intervention and prevention efforts should target various areas of Muslim children's lives to maximize the support provided.

Additional FYI Resources



The Family and Youth Institute's Bullying Prevention Toolkit

This toolkit includes numerous resources for parents including: advice on how to talk to your child about bullying, the impact of bullying on Muslim kids, our FYI Bullying Prevention Infographic, resources for school administrators, and resources for youth themselves. These resources come in the form of articles, videos, webinars, and infographics.

<http://www.thefyi.org/toolkits/youth-support-tool-kit/>



Webinars for School Administrators

Strategies for Educators, Counselors and Community Members to Build Protective Factors for America's Muslim Youth

https://ojjdptta.adobeconnect.com/_a1110525827/p4tenfnjnh/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal&proto=true

Helping Educators and Counselors Prevent Bullying of and Discrimination against our Nation's Muslim Youth from The Office of Juvenile Justice

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/enews/16juvjust/160428.html>

At the time of publication, the above links were in working order.



FYI Workshops and Lectures

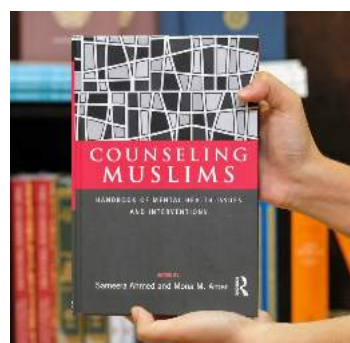
The Family and Youth Institute has an array of workshops and lectures available on topics related to positive parenting and bullying prevention. Check them out at: <http://www.thefyi.org/workshops/>



State of American Muslim Youth : Research and

Recommendations by Sameera Ahmed, Sadiq Patel, and Hanan Hashem in collaboration with ISPU

This report identifies the nuances and complexities of American Muslim youth's developmental context and environments. It highlights research on underserved Muslim youth populations—namely young Muslim women, African American Muslim youth, convert Muslim youth, and refugee Muslim youth. Risk factors and behaviors are also highlighted. Finally, eight youth programming recommendations that can be implemented around three developmental contexts (families, schools, and communities) are provided.



Counseling Muslims: Handbook of Mental Health Issues and Interventions Edited by Sameera Ahmed and Mona M. Amer

The issues and interventions discussed in this book, by authoritative contributors, are diverse and multifaceted. Topics that have been ignored in previous literature are introduced, such as sex therapy, substance abuse counseling, university counseling, and community-based prevention. Chapters integrate tables, lists, and suggested phrasing for practitioners, along with case studies that are used by the authors to help illustrate concepts and potential interventions.

Additional Resources*

*At the time of publication, the links below were in working order and directed the user to the titled resource.

ING Bullying Prevention Report

<https://ing.org/bullying-prevention-guide/>

ISPU Educators Toolkit

<https://www.ispu.org/educators/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/index.html>



Dr. Dan Olweus Bullying Research, History & Prevention Statistics. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program:

http://www.olweus.org/public/bullying_research.page

No Bully.com:

<http://www.nobully.com/>

StopBullying.gov:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

The Bully Project:

<http://www.thebullyproject.com/>

Not in Our School Parent Guide to Preventing Bullying and Intolerance:

<http://www.niot.org/sites/default/files/Parent%20guide%20booklet%20screen.pdf>

CDC Understanding Bullying Fact Sheet:

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullyingfactsheet2014-a.pdf.pdf>

Harassment, Bullying and Free Expression: Guidelines for Free and Safe Public Schools:

<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/tag/bullying>

Cyberbullying:

www.safekids.com/bullying-cyberbullying-resources/

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