



Effects of gender, political affiliation and right-wing authoritarianism on Islamophobic attitudes

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ABSTRACT

This aim of this research was to investigate whether gender, political affiliation, and right-wing authoritarianism could significantly predict Islamophobic attitudes. A group of 121 mixed age and gender participants were recruited, who completed Altemeyer's 1981 Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale and Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani's 2009 Islamophobia Scale. A multiple regression analysis was conducted which revealed that right-wing authoritarianism was the only variable that significantly predicted levels of Islamophobia. It is recommended that further research is conducted into Islamophobia using the Islamophobia Scale to outline other personality factors which may contribute to the development of this prejudice, in order to implement appropriate intervention strategies within education and the workplace.

KEY
WORDS:

ISLAMOPHOBIA

RIGHT-WING
AUTHORITARIAN

POLITICAL
AFFILIATION

GENDER

PREJUDICE

Racism is everywhere. It protrudes in education (Talwar, 2012), in the workplace (Unison, 2011), and in many institutions such as health care (Dangerfield, 2012; Bhopal, 2007). The U.S Commission on Civil Rights (1970) defines racism as "any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of skin color" (pp. 5). Racism has always been a prevalent form of discrimination within western society (Fernando, 2003). Fredrickson (2003) outlines the progression of racism throughout history. He explains that the first sign of racism emerged in the 13th and 14th centuries, when people started to identify the Jews with witchcraft and the Devil. During the Renaissance and Reformation periods, which stretched from the 15th to the 17th century, people in Europe began to come into contact with people who had darker skin - people from Africa, Asia and the Americas. Most commonly these people were used as slaves. Slaves began being transported to America in the early years of the 17th century. White people justified the subjugation of black people by saying that in the Bible, black people were heathens and had been condemned to be servants (Fredrickson, 2003). Following this, in the 18th century and early 19th century, it was suggested that the races of the world were not just different races, but different species. This view was particularly popular amongst those who were in support of slavery. This has been refuted by some (e.g., Owens & King, 1999), who claim that race has no genetic underpinnings. This view of the existence of a 'pure' race was exemplified in Germany, where Jewish people, who adhered strongly to their own set of religious beliefs and cultural practices, were described as un-pure (Frederickson, 2003).

The 19th century saw growth and intensification of racist ideology, with Darwinian views of the evolution of the 'fittest' species encouraging what was referred to as 'scientific racism'. The 20th century then saw the coming of what Frederickson (2003) refers to as racist regimes, which resulted in racial segregation laws being introduced in the American South. Black voting rights were reduced, and Black men were frequently portrayed as ravenous beasts, lusting after white women. Racist ideology reached its extreme in Nazi Germany, when Hitler tried to exterminate an entire ethnic group. People's horror at this discredited the theory that racial attitudes were actually respectable and that racist genetic research reinforcing racism was credible. Despite this, however, racism continued in places like South Africa, where it was illegal for black and white people to inter-marry and to live amongst each other, again signifying the concern with 'race purity'.

Fortunately, people became increasingly against racism and attempts were made to rectify and curb prejudice. In modern society, legislation has been used widely to reinforce the law and counter racism. In the United States, for example, one of the first attempts at attacking racism came from the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s which outlawed racial segregation laws (Frederickson, 2003). In the UK, the Race Relations Act was introduced in 1976 in an attempt to eliminate and protect individuals from racial discrimination in the workplace. The Act applies to the four main types of discrimination: direct (deliberate and overt racism i.e., a job promotion only available for members of one race); indirect (discrimination that involves practicing policies that aim to disadvantage different racial groups); harassment (when the workplace allows racist jokes or hostile behaviour to occur); and victimisation (this occurs when the victim has

complained about racism in the workplace and it has not been taken seriously) (Morrisey, 2013). International Treaties such as the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was also put into force in 1969, which also focused on addressing racism within employment and educational settings (Morrisey, 2013). Although certain measures have been enforced in an attempt to reduce racism within society, it is argued constantly that racism is still a powerful and destructive prejudice. As an example, Bonilla-Silva (2010) contends that although most people will claim they are not racist, racism still prevails within western society. Although statistics from England and Wales suggest that racist hate crimes have decreased from 2009-2010 by 8 per cent, there were still 47,678 incidents that occurred (Home Office, 2012). Therefore, although racist attacks may have reduced slightly, it is clear that racism is still a prominent issue. Some argue that racism still exists, but is manifested in more subtle and varied ways, such as in people's thoughts, actions and attitudes (Morrisey, 2013).

Over the years, racism has become increasingly diverse and taken on many different forms. This research will focus specifically on Islamophobia, which is characterised by hostile and fearful dislike of all or most Muslims (Runnymede Trust, 1997). Islamophobia is a fairly modern term and was propounded by the Runnymede Trust in 1997. The report - Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All - was launched by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, and was one of the first attempts to tackle this increasing form of prejudice. Since this report was published, levels of Islamophobia amongst westerners have shown no signs of decreasing. Indeed, this form of prejudice has become more prominent as years have gone on, and particularly obvious when terrorist attacks are carried out by Muslim extremists. Research has looked at certain factors that have attributed to this elevation of Islamophobia, such as media reporting, personality aspects and demographic variables such as gender.

The Rise in Islamophobia

Schwartz (2005) described Islamophobia as holding the view that those who worship Islam are extremist. Those who are Islamophobic deny the very existence of the majority of Muslims, who are - in fact - not extremists, but moderate. This fear of extremist Muslims has increased significantly since the tragic September 11 (9/11) terrorist attacks in New York in 2001. Deane and Fears (2006) reported a poll by the Washington Post - ABC News, which found that nearly half of Americans hold negative views regarding Islam, numbers which have nearly doubled since 9/11, indicating the effect the attacks had on people's opinions. Mujahid (2011) corroborated these findings with a report on a later poll conducted in 2010 by the Washington Post - ABC News, which confirmed that prejudice towards Muslims are still rising following the earlier poll. The 2010 poll revealed that only 37% of Americans hold positive opinions of Islam. Mujahid (2011) also reported that 22% of Americans also admitted they would not want to live next to a Muslim in a Gallup USA Today Poll. Esposito and Lalwani (2010) reported that Islamophobia may be increasing because people are tempted to see Islam and Muslims only as extremists. They claim this is supported by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life which showed that 38% of people held unfavourable views of Muslims, which - like other results established - had increased and was worse than in 2005. In the UK the opinions tended to reflect the

negativity of the Americans. A YouGov Survey found that 33% of people felt threatened by Muslims in 2001. This figure rose to 53% in 2006 (Johnston, 2006), again supporting evidence that negative and fear related attitudes towards Muslims have increased.

In addition to providing statistical evidence documenting the rise in Islamophobia amongst Westerners, research shows that the media is a key contributor in heightening prejudice towards Muslims, as well as encouraging fear. Following the attacks on 9/11, the media has bombarded society with negative images of Muslims, which has led many to believe that this has encouraged and increased prejudice (e.g., Scheufele, Nisbet & Ostman, 2005; Shaw, 2012). Clark (2012) reported a study conducted by Christopher Bail, who analysed media representations of Muslims between 2001 and 2008. He found many negative portrayals of Muslims which he believes could account for increased levels of prejudice. Similar media coverage occurred following the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London. Shaw (2012) analysed articles in eight widely read UK newspapers and found prejudice and anti-Muslim discourse throughout, undoubtedly contributing to the development of negative stereotypes. Muslims themselves have also reported increased encounters of discrimination against them. Following the September 11 attacks Muslims claimed 76.3% overt discrimination (e.g., seeing negative stereotypes in the media, violent or life-threatening experiences, witnessing discrimination or prejudice directed towards others) and 82.6% indirect discrimination (e.g., being treated with suspicion, being stared at) exerted onto them (Sheridan, 2006). This combination of acts of terrorism and the subsequent stereotype-encouraging media coverage seems to have heightened widespread self-reported dislike of Muslims amongst those in the West, particularly Americans, which can be held accountable for the undeniable rise in Islamophobia.

Right-wing Authoritarianism

It is apparent from the literature reviewed that the media may have contributed significantly to the development of Islamophobia and racist attitudes via biased reporting on terrorist attacks carried out by minority extremists to stir fear and negativity amongst society (Shaw, 2012; Scheufele, Nisbet & Ostman, 2005). However, for this to affect individuals' opinions and guide people towards forming stereotypes of certain groups in society, there must be certain personality or individual factors that contribute to the likelihood of being discriminatory. For example, research has found that high levels of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) correlate significantly with levels of prejudice and racist attitudes (Stefurak, Taylor & Mehta, 2010). Similar findings were reported by Rowatt, Franklin and Cotton (2005), who found that levels of prejudice towards Muslims specifically correlated with high levels of RWA. Although it is clear that there is a direct association between high levels of authoritarianism and racial prejudice (Stefurak, Taylor & Mehta, 2010), other factors such as terrorism also seem to be accountable for higher levels of authoritarianism. Echebarria-Echabe and Fernández-Guede (2006) discovered that following terrorist attacks carried out in Madrid by Islamist extremists, levels of anti-Arab prejudice and right-wing authoritarianism increased. In addition to holding negative attitudes towards Muslims, the perceived danger of an out-group domain has been found to correlate significantly with RWA (Duckitt & Sibley 2007), which could be attributed to enhanced fearful perceptions of Muslims due to media exposure following terrorist attacks (Scheufele, Nisbet & Ostman, 2005; Shaw, 2012). Cohrs and Asbrock (2009) also found that perception of an out-group had an effect of RWA, especially when the group was seen as socially threatening. As well as an

increase in prejudice, there was an increase in hate crimes. Research into these crimes towards Arabs in the US also found correlations between the crimes, prejudice and RWA (Johnson, Labouff, Rowatt, Patock-Peckham & Carlisle, 2012). High levels of right-wing authoritarianism have been described as the most influential indicator of racism (Van Hiel, Pandelaere & Duriez, 2004), which is seemingly apparent from the rich amount of research investigating this personality factor. In addition to relating to levels of RWA, prejudice is thought to be influenced by other demographic factors such as political affiliation (Cribbs & Austin, 2011).

Political Affiliation

A person's political orientation is thought to reflect their personal values and attitudes (Purkayastha, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011). As right-wing ideology is replicated via right-wing authoritarianism, it is often found in literature that those who vote for typically right-wing political parties tend to be more authoritarian and hold higher levels of prejudice (Pedersen & Hartley, 2011). As well as possessing a right-wing stance, low levels of education and limited cognitive ability are also thought to predict high levels of prejudice through the mediation of right-wing authoritarianism, as found by Hodson and Busseri (2012). The researchers analysed two large UK studies, and found that there was a significant relationship between low IQ in children and subsequent right-wing political views as adults. They also found that socio-economic status had no effect. Hodson and Busseri (2012) believe that limited reasoning ability creates a pathway to the development of right-wing views and high levels of prejudice. This suggestion of a relationship between limited intelligence, right-wing political views and racism has also been supported by Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty, and Deary (2010). Relationships between right-wing affiliation and prejudice was also found in Italy by Prezza, Zampatti, Pacilli and Paoliello (2008), with those supporting left-wing parties revealing lower levels of prejudice than right-wing supporters. Similar attitudes were also found in the US amongst those who vote for right-wing parties. Ponterotto et al. (1995) looked into levels of multicultural sensitivity amongst those of right-wing affiliation and those of a left-wing affiliation. They found that Democrats held more multicultural sensitivity than Republicans. These results, therefore, provide more evidence that those who are less sensitive to different cultures are more likely to adopt racist attitudes. In specific relation to Islamophobia in the US, this form of racism tends to be higher amongst Republicans than non-Republicans (Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009), again showing evidence that political affiliation has an effect on the likelihood of racism.

Gender

As well as political affiliation affecting levels of prejudice, it is thought that gender may also play a role in the likelihood of being racist. Stereotypically, females tend to be thought of as the more caring and gentle sex, supported by Wang et al. (2003). They found that females are more likely to express empathic emotions concerning justice or fairness, and are also more aware of cultural differences between people and experiences of those from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. As a result, it may be presumed that women would tend to be less racist than men. Toussaint and Webb (2005) also found evidence to support that women are the more empathetic sex, again supporting that women may be less racist in general than men. In addition to suggesting that women are more empathic, research has also looked into the differences in sex in

regard to multicultural sensitivity. It was found that women scored higher on this than men (Ponterotto et al., 1995), suggesting that females' sensitivity toward cultural differences may be the reasoning for their apparent lower levels of racist tendencies. As well as being more accepting and empathetic towards different races, women have also been found to be score lower on authoritarian and ethnocentrism scales (Kemmelmeier, 2010). As found in previous literature, high levels of authoritarianism indicate a high likelihood of individuals holding racist attitudes, therefore indicating that men have tendencies to hold more negative and insensitive attitudes towards other races than females. To attempt to explain these sex differences, McDonald, Navarrete and Van Vugt (2012) recently published research investigating male prejudice sparked by aggression towards out-groups. They developed 'the male warrior hypothesis', a theory that suggests that men have a tribal instinct which results in them treating members who do not belong to their group maliciously. The male warrior hypothesis was examined in research by Van Vugt, De Cremer and Janssen (2007), who found that men tended to respond more strongly to intergroup threats than women. This theory, therefore, may explain why certain underlying thought processes and individual behaviour differences in sexes could contribute to different attitudes and prejudices.

The Present Study

Overall, it has been established in the literature on racism that independently, right-wing authoritarianism, gender and political affiliation affect levels of prejudice. However, all factors have not been investigated collectively to examine whether they affect a more specific form of racism: Islamophobia. Individually, large amounts of research have been conducted on Islamophobia as a single phenomenon, but little work has focused specifically on the effect of right-wing authoritarianism on Islamophobia. Similarly, there is a substantial amount of research investigating the effects of left-wing versus right-wing ideology and orientation on levels of prejudice and racism, particularly in the US. However, research on the effects of political affiliation on prejudice in the UK is scarce; as is specific research focused on examining the relationship between political orientation and Islamophobia. For all three factors – right-wing authoritarianism, gender, and political affiliation – there is rarely research identifying their collective contribution towards the development of Islamophobic attitudes. This research will focus on examining the effects of each factor (gender, political affiliation, and right-wing authoritarianism) as a contributor to levels of Islamophobia, measured using 'The Islamophobia Scale' (Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009); and whether there is a relationship between the variables: gender, political affiliation (The Conservative Party, The British National Party, The Labour Party and The Liberal Democrats) and right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine whether gender, political affiliation and right-wing authoritarianism affect levels of Islamophobia. It is hypothesised that gender, right-wing authoritarianism and political affiliation will have a significant relationship with levels of Islamophobia.

Method

Participants

146 participants in total were recruited to take part in the online study; however 25 participants withdrew from the study during completion, leaving a total of 121 remaining. Participants who completed the study in full consisted of 73 females and 48 males, with

ages ranging from 18-60 years ($M = 28.83$; $SD = 11.89$). Participants were asked to indicate their political affiliation: The Conservative Party ($N = 22$); The Labour Party ($N = 33$); The British National Party ($N = 2$); and The Liberal Democrats ($N = 15$). Participants could also indicate if they were unsure ($N = 39$) or if they supported another party (e.g., 'Other', $N = 10$). Those recruited also indicated their race/ethnicity. Participants were recruited via multiple means: Facebook statuses for Facebook friends; 'Tweets' on Twitter to followers; Emails to those in contact lists; and by approaching people in the Leeds Metropolitan University Library and asking them to take part. Advertising that took place online (i.e., on Facebook), involved posting the link to the website containing the survey, along with a brief description of what the study involved and how long it would take. Recruitment that took place in person (i.e., approaching students in the library), involved printing off the link to the survey on a small piece of paper and verbally explaining to participants what the study entailed, and providing them opportunity to read the instructions online before taking part.

Measures

Participants were initially required to complete a demographic sheet, indicating their gender, age in years, political affiliation (The Labour Party, The Liberal Democrats, The British National Party, The Conservative Party, Unsure, Other), and race/ethnicity. The first scale administered was the Right-Wing Authoritarian Scale (RWA) (Altemeyer, 1981, cited in Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991; e.g., 'Laws have to be strictly enforced if we are going to preserve our way of life') (see Appendix A), consisting of 24 items where participants were required to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement on a 5-point likert scale (e.g., 'Strongly Disagree'; 'Disagree'; 'Not Sure'; 'Agree'; 'Strongly Agree'). Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 22 and 23 were reverse scored. The second and final scale completed by participants was the Islamophobia Scale (IS) (Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009; e.g., 'I would become extremely uncomfortable speaking with a Muslim') (see Appendix B). Items 1, 8, and 12 were altered in order for the questions to apply to the UK (e.g., 'I would support any policy that would stop the building of new mosques (Muslim place of worship) in the U.S', was changed to: 'I would support any policy that would stop the building of new mosques (Muslim place of worship) in the UK'). The IS consisted of 16 statements, with items 1-8 labelled as the Affective-Behavioural subscale (I-AB), as these questions represented behaviours and emotions related to avoidance and discomfort associated with Muslims and Islam. The second subscale ranging from items 8-16 belonged to the Cognitive subscale (I-CG), as these items relate to the belief that Islam is a world dominating, violent, and harmful religion. The IS was scored using the same likert scale as the RWA scale. For both the subscales in the IS and the RWA scale, the coefficient alphas conformed to the acceptable ranges of internal consistency, according to DeVellis (1991) (I-AB $\alpha = .92$, I-CG $\alpha = .94$; RWA $\alpha = .88$). In the case of this study, reliability for both the RWA and the IS subscales was still at an acceptable level (RWA $\alpha = .88$; I-AB $\alpha = .94$, I-CG $\alpha = .96$).

Procedure

All participants who decided to take part in the study used their own computers or internet-enabled device to follow the link provided through advertisement to Survey Monkey's website. The researcher was not present when any participant took part in the study, in order to avoid the Hawthorne effect (i.e., an alteration in responding due to the

awareness of being watched (McCarney, Warner, Iliffe, van Haselen, Griffin, & Fisher, 2007)). Each participant was only required to take part in the study once, and therefore no order effects or practice effects occurred. Additionally, no time limit was enforced so all participants were able to complete the study at their own pace. The participant was first presented with a standardised participant information sheet (see Appendix C), which explained some of the aims of the research and what participating in the study would entail. Although the title of the study was presented as 'Views on Religion', and the full title of the study (Effects of Gender, Political Affiliation and Right-Wing Authoritarianism on Islamophobia) was not initially presented to participants to reduce the likelihood of socially desirable responses. However, participants were still made aware of the nature of the questions they were being asked to answer. The full title of the study was made clear to participants at the end of the study, before they submitted their data. The participant information sheet made it clear to participants that their participation was entirely voluntary and that, should they wish to withdraw from the study whilst completing it, this was available to do at any time by clicking 'quit' in the corner of the screen. Once they had read this page, all participants were instructed to click 'next' to proceed to the online consent form (see Appendix D). The form instructed participants to read the statements regarding their consent carefully, and if they agreed to the conditions mentioned then they would click 'next' to give their online consent and continue to the demographic sheet. The demographic sheet required participants to indicate their gender, their age in years, their political affiliation (choices given were: The Labour Party; The Liberal Democrats; The British National Party; The Conservative Party; Unsure; or Other), and their race/ethnicity. On the following page participants were presented with the RWA scale, which consisted of 24 items in which participants indicated the extent to which they agreed by selecting either 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Not Sure', 'Agree', or 'Strongly Agree'. Finally, participants completed the IS, which consisted of 16 statements regarding Muslims and Islam, in which participants stated whether they agreed or not. The IS was scored using the same likert scale as the RWA scale. Once participants had completed the scales they were directed to the final page of the study which contained the online debrief (see Appendix E). This page explained to participants the full aims and title of the experiment and the purpose of the research. The participants were offered additional reading on the topic of the study, should they have wished to gain further insight into the research. It was then reiterated that the participants could either submit their data or withdraw it, and contact details of the researcher and supervisor were provided.

Results

Initially, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate differences between males' and females' scores on both subscales of the Islamophobia Scale (IS): the Affective-Behavioural subscale (I-AB) and the Cognitive subscale (I-CG). Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity. No serious violations were noted; however, Levene's Test of equality of error variances revealed that the assumption of equality of variance had been violated; therefore a more conservative alpha level of .025 was set, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The difference between males and females on the scores of each subscale were not statistically significant, $F(2, 118) = 1.21, p = .30$; Wilks' Lambda = .98; partial eta squared = .02, therefore gender did not have a significant effect on levels of Islamophobia. When the results for the dependent

variables were considered separately, neither the I-AB subscale ($F(1, 119) = 2.42, p = .122$, partial eta squared = .02), nor the I-CG subscale ($F(1, 119) = 1.56, p = .214$, partial eta squared = .01) reached statistical significance.

Two standard multiple regression analyses were then used to assess the ability of gender, political affiliation and RWA to predict levels of Islamophobia within each subscale (I-CG and I-AB). Prior to conducting the analysis, the data was screened for missing values or outliers. There was no missing data found, although a few outliers were detected. Upon this discovery the data was inspected thoroughly and it was found that the outliers would not be problematic in the analysis and therefore the decision was made for the data to be retained. Preliminary analyses were also undertaken to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for both the IS subscales and RWA scores are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for IS subscales and RWA (N=121)

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Islamophobia (IS)				
I-AB	13.77	6.62	1.42	1.85
I-CG	17.19	7.88	.63	-.18
Right-wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	71.72	13.65	.048	.058

An examination of the skewness values and a visual inspection of the data frequency lead to the assumption that the data for all variables was approximately normally distributed. Correlations between I-CG are shown in Table 2. Correlations for the I-AB subscale are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Correlations between all variables

Variable	I-CG	RWA	Gender	Political Affiliation
I-CG	-	.396*	-.114	.029
RWA	.396*	-	-.064	.235
Gender	-.114	-.064	-	.148
Political Affiliation	.029	.235	.148	-

* $p < .01$ **Table 3****Correlations between all variables**

Variable	I-AB	RWA	Gender	Political Affiliation
I-AB	-	.479*	-.141	-.045
RWA	.479*	-	-.064	.235
Gender	-.141	-.064	-	.148
Political Affiliation	-.045	.235	.148	-

* $p < .01$

The total variance explained by the model as a whole for the I-AB subscale was 24.3%, $F(3, 117) = 13.87$, $p < .01$. Results show that only RWA scores ($B = 0.25$, $SE B = 0.04$; $beta = .51$, $p < .0001$) made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of Islamophobia. Neither gender ($B = -1.16$, $SE B = 1.09$; $beta = -.09$, $p = 0.29$), nor political affiliation ($B = -0.49$, $SE B = 0.27$; $beta = -.15$, $p = 0.07$), made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of Islamophobia. Similar results were found for the I-CG subscale. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 14.6%, $F(3, 117) = 7.82$, $p < .01$. RWA scores ($B = 0.23$, $SE B = 0.05$; $beta = .40$, $p < .01$) provided a statistically significant contribution towards the prediction of Islamophobia. Neither gender ($B = -1.29$, $SE B = 1.38$; $beta = -.08$, $p = 0.35$), nor political affiliation ($B = -0.21$, $SE B = 0.34$; $beta = -.05$, $p = 0.54$) made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of Islamophobia. Results indicate that out of the two subscales, RWA was the best predictor for I-AB.

Discussion

Previous research has suggested that gender (Wang et al., 2003; Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Kimmelmeier, 2010; Ponterotto et al., 1995), political affiliation (Prezza, Zampatti, Pacilli & Paoliello, 2008; Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009; Piurko, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011), and right-wing authoritarianism (Stefurak, Taylor & Mehta, 2010; Rowatt, Franklin & Cotton, 2005) affect levels of racism, prejudice, and Islamophobia. This present study sought to replicate such findings, in the case of

examining the effects of the variables on two subscales within the Islamophobia Scale (IS) – the Affective-Behavioural subscale (I-AB), and the Cognitive subscale (I-CG). The results showed that, although there were differences between mean scores on the subscales within the IS and gender, they were not significant. Additionally, gender and political affiliation had no significant effects on a participant's score on the IS. There was, however, a significant effect of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) on both subscales in the IS.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Islamophobia

It has been established in the literature that high levels of right-wing authoritarianism are a strong predictor of racism and prejudice (Stefurak, Taylor & Mehta, 2010; Rowatt, Franklin and Cotton, 2005; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Van Hiel, Pandelaere & Duriez, 2004). Therefore it was predicted that a similar result would be found by examining the effects of RWA on a specific form of racism: Islamophobia. The results were as expected; indicating that racism - in its many forms - is associated with high levels of right-wing authoritarianism. Altemeyer's (1981, cited in Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991) RWA scale aims to identify the three different types of right-wing authoritarianism: authoritarian submission, aggression, and conventionality (Altemeyer, 1981, cited in Dion, 1990). Further research published by Altemeyer (1988, cited in Dion, 1990) looked deeper into the development of the right-wing authoritarian personality, which has repeatedly shown that those who score high on the RWA measure are prepared to punish people who question and threaten those high in power and authority, with a disregard of civil rights. However, Dion (1990) points out that these attitudinal responses are merely in the case of a hypothetical situation, rather than in reality, therefore right-wing authoritarians should not be seen as a threat to countries such as the US and Canada (as Altemeyer suggests) unless respondents are particularly willing to act on these beliefs. Although, the results of the present study highlight that the personality traits associated with right-wing authoritarianism clearly contribute towards Islamophobia, a form of racism that has been shown to result in anti-Muslim hate crime (Sheridan, 2006). Therefore, it is important that the potentially harmful impact of Islamophobia is made clear in order to reduce prejudice and protect those discriminated against. The RWA scale, although used widely, is not without criticism. Although much research has found this to be a strong predictor for prejudice in many different forms, Ray (1985) has criticised the validity of this, claiming that the scale only measures conservatism and does not measure authoritarianism. Regardless of this, it is undeniable that the RWA scale is still an effective scale for predicting prejudicial attitudes, as was the case in the present study.

Although research on levels of Islamophobia worryingly point out that this specific form of racism is rising constantly (Deane and Fears, 2006; Mujahid, 2011; Esposito and Lalwani, 2010; Johnston, 2006), it seems apparent that the majority of research focuses on a more general level of racism and prejudicial attitudes (e.g., Van Hiel, Pandelaere & Duriez, 2004; Cribbs & Austin, 2011). The scale used in the present study (The Islamophobia Scale - Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009) consists of two subscale measures that identify two different aspects of Islamophobia: behaviours and emotions related to avoidance and discomfort associated with Muslims and Islam (I-AB); and cognitions relating to beliefs that Islam promotes violence, is harmful, and aims to be world-dominating (I-CG). These fearful emotions and avoidance behaviours that Islamophobia consists of are consistent throughout findings in literature related to

this form of racism. For example, Mujahid (2011) reported the finding that 22% of Americans admitted they would not want to live next to a Muslim. This relates to the behaviours measured in the I-AB subscale, as this is a form of avoidance behaviour. Additionally, research highlights how those who hold Islamophobic views believe Islam to be an evil religion consisting of violent extremists (Esposito & Lalwani, 2010), which relates to the cognitive subscale (I-CG) and the negative beliefs that Islamophobic individuals hold about Muslims. These different aspects that shape Islamophobic attitudes are therefore important for understanding the underlying cognitions and behavioural aspects involved in the development of this form of racism, and it is recommended that the IS is used in further research to gain additional insight into this intensifying prejudice.

Gender and Islamophobia

Although there was a significant effect of RWA on Islamophobia, this was not the case with gender in this research. Although previous research (Ponterotto et al., 1995; Wang et al., 2003) indicated this was a relationship that had been found on numerous occasions, this was not found in all studies. For example Hughes and Tuch (2003) examined data from the General Social Surveys from 1988-2000 and the 1988, 1990, 1992 and 1994 American National Election Studies and found that previous findings regarding gender and racism were extremely small and inconsistent, therefore refuting the common stereotype presented in other literature that women tend to be less racist than men. There are also several limitations of the studies reviewed which may account for lack of significant findings in the present study that are consistent with other research. For example, Wang et al. (2003) specifically measured levels of ethnocultural empathy, that is, generally more empathic towards those belonging to a different racial or ethnic group from oneself, whereas the present study aimed to measure levels of prejudice towards Muslims specifically. It can also be argued that the study is flawed due to the lack of generalisability of the findings as a result of the homogeneity of the sample. Wang et al. (2003) point out that all participants who took part in the study were college students mainly aged from 19-22. As they quite rightly highlight, ethnocultural empathy is likely to differ in those from different educational and economic backgrounds, as well as different age groups, again affecting the extent to which findings can be generalised. Similarly, research conducted by Toussaint and Webb (2005) aimed to identify gender differences in empathy and forgiveness. Although results are similar to Wang et al.'s (2003) research, these findings cannot necessarily account for higher levels of racism amongst men, as prejudice was not measured.

Political Affiliation and Islamophobia

As was the case for gender, political affiliation did not significantly predict levels of Islamophobia. Although previous research (Prezza, Zampatti, Pacilli & Paoliello, 2008; Lee, Gibbons, Thompson & Timani, 2009; Piurko, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011) suggested that those who support typically right-wing political parties tend to hold more racist and prejudiced views, this was not found to be the case in the present study. Some researchers deny that there is even an existence in differences of levels of racism amongst right-wing and left-wing political party supporters (e.g., Tabarrok, 2012). However, it can also be argued that the lack of significant effect of political affiliation on Islamophobia could be due to the confusion and controversy surrounding politics today.

For example, Daley (2012) argues that because right-wing and left-wing politicians around the world all draw on the same principles, it has now become impossible to distinguish the once clear-cut fundamental differences between right and left-wing politics. Also, in the UK, following the formation of the coalition government where a supposedly left-wing party - the Liberal Democrats - has joined forces with a typically right-wing political party - the Conservatives - has left many to doubt whether the Liberal Democrats can still be classed as left-wing. For example, Jack (2012) argues that, following the establishment of the coalition of the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats' left-wing status has been greatly doubted by their supporters, as they appear to be in support of many right-wing ideologies put forward by the Conservatives. This confusion and obvious lack of confidence in Liberal Democrats as a left-wing party may mean that the categories of political affiliation in this study could be flawed. The Conservatives and the British National Party were classed as right-wing parties, whereas the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party were classed as left-wing. Due to the controversy surrounding the status and position of the Liberal Democrat party, it may be that those who identified themselves as Liberal Democrat supporters (N= 15), do not actually support left-wing values, but accept the Liberal Democrats as a party further on the right. Grice (2010) reported that even Nick Clegg himself has suggested that the Liberal Democrats should not be seen as a left-wing alternative to Labour, therefore the grouping of these four main political parties into typically right-wing and typically left-wing parties may have contributed to the non-significant findings regarding political affiliation and Islamophobia.

Theoretical Implications

Although it is clear from previous research that racial discrimination still resides within society, and despite the fact that it is apparent high scoring on the RWA scale seems to be a strong predictor of racism and Islamophobia, it remains unclear how racist attitudes develop. Sihera (2007) proposed that there are four main causes of racism. The first is what she refers to as species protection. Sihera (2007) claims that we instinctively gravitate towards others who are similar to us in terms of the way they look. This relates to the theory that those who are perceived as being part of an out-group are often less favoured than those who are within the group (Brewer, 1999). In the case of Islamophobia, those who belong to a different religious group may therefore see Muslims as an out-group. The second is fear of loss and displacement, which explains that people fear loss of those of their own kind; therefore protect others we believe to be similar to ourselves. The third cause of racism is ignorance. Sihera (2007) explains that racism is a vicious circle in which people grow up believing certain things that other family members believe too, which then leads to the person believing their view is right. For example, if many have been led to believe via family members or biased media representations of Muslims that they are dangerous, this will have a negative effect on the persons' opinions. And finally, the fourth cause is thought to be a lack of self esteem. The claim is that the most racist people in society tend to hold negative views of their self and project these negative feelings onto others who they deem less worthy and vulnerable.

Although there may be many reasons why people develop personal racist views, the issues racism causes for those who are on the receiving end are undeniable. Research

has shown that those who suffer from racist discrimination are more likely to suffer from ill health. Anderson (2013) found that the stress, both emotional and physical, endured as a result of perceived racism is an extremely influential factor for predicting overall poorer mental and physical health. Racism is also found to cause victims to have lower levels of self-esteem and increases the likelihood of suffering from depression (Fernando, 1984). Unfortunately, however, it appears that if victims of racism attempt to ignore the discrimination against them, it can make the distress even worse. Bible (2010) reported a study conducted by Professor of Counseling Alvin Alvarez, who claims that those who attempt to ignore racial discrimination as a means of coping, can amplify the levels of stress and anxiety the individual endures.

As is shown from previous literature, racism in any shape or form affects the individual who is being discriminated against (Fernando, 1984). Although previous legislation has been introduced in an attempt to reduce racism, research has shown that it is still a prevalent issue within society (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Therefore, other suggestions as means of reducing racism have been put forward. As it is apparent that fear of out-groups can lead to Islamophobia (Sihera, 2007), it is suggested by Maroney (2009) that individuals should – in order to reduce out-group fear – be encouraged to become familiar with each other as similar and equally important members of society. It is proposed that these familiarisations should be made within education in order to raise awareness in children to prevent negative stereotypes being made about certain religious or ethnic groups. The National Association of School Psychologists (2012) proposes that school psychologists should provide assistance with policy reformation in order to ensure children thrive within education. School psychologists aim to raise awareness of discrimination and to engage students in learning about cultural differences and the effects of negative racial stereotyping. This seems to be an appropriate intervention in reducing Islamophobia as research has shown the highest levels of prejudice are held amongst children in school (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011).

Limitations

There are a few limitations that occurred in the present study. One that may be indicative of social desirability within the sample is the high dropout rate. A number of participants withdrew from the study upon arriving at the final scale (the IS). Therefore, it could be interpreted that participants did not feel comfortable with the statements presented in the IS, as it involved the participants stating their opinions regarding Muslims. Whether this is due to high levels of prejudice they were not willing to admit remains unknown. This could, however, suggest that those who did take part answered in a socially desirable manner, that being that they did not wish to agree to such strong statements. The effects of socially desirable responding could have resulted in invalid responses, and therefore in further research on Islamophobia it is suggested that social desirability is controlled for by using the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). It is apparent that measuring prejudice, particularly racism, has its limitations due to the nature of racism. Many are embarrassed by their prejudiced views, and tend to deny the existence of them (Van Dijk, 1992). Also, many researchers claim that racism – although still prevalent in today's society – tends to reside itself in more covert ways (Ikuenobe, 2010), therefore it is difficult to establish who may or may not be Islamophobic by simply asking them to express their opinions

on Muslims. A further flaw in the current study is that, due to the widespread nature of Islamophobia, it would have been beneficial to have obtained a much larger sample size in order to gain truly representative results.

Future research

Although three different factors: gender, political affiliation and RWA were measured to investigate their ability to predict levels of Islamophobia, there are still many other personality and demographic factors which could be examined further in future research. It is important that these predictor factors are highlighted in order to effectively impose further intervention methods to reduce Islamophobia. For example, in addition to RWA, other personality measures such as Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) have also found to be linked to high levels of prejudice (e.g., Kteily, Sidanius & Levin, 2011). In addition to this, they are also used alongside each other in research (e.g., Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2005) to predict racism. Therefore, it may have been useful to explore scores on this measure alongside RWA to see if SDO can predict levels of Islamophobia, as was found with RWA; and which is the stronger predictor variable of the two.

Another variable which has been found to relate to high levels of prejudice and bias is age. It has been established in previous research (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011) that prejudice amongst adolescents peaks during the ages of 5-7 years. It has also been suggested that adults who are particularly prejudiced have a reduced capacity to inhibit automatic biased associations (Gonsalkorale, Sherman & Klauer, 2009). This research indicates the variance in prejudice amongst those of different ages. However, there is little research that has been conducted into age differences of those who hold Islamophobic attitudes and therefore it may be useful to investigate this in order to assess which age group to provide information for in the case of intervention and reduction strategies against Islamophobia.

In addition to age, it is thought by many researchers that there may be a relationship between level of education and racist attitudes. Jones (2011) provided statistical evidence from a Gallup poll which revealed that those who held a postgraduate or higher level of education were more likely to be in favour of white and black people marrying (94%), suggesting lower levels of racism than those who have a level of education of high school or less (78%). In Scotland, similar results regarding level of education have been found, with particular focus on Islamophobia. Hussain and Miller (2005) reported findings from the Economic and Research Council's Research Programme on Devolution and Constitutional Change, which highlight that the level of education of individuals has the most profound impact on Islamophobia, and that those who are more highly educated tend to be less racist towards Muslims than those who are less educated. Koch, McMillan and Peper (2011) claim that a person's educational level is the most crucial factor in the development of racist attitudes. They suggest it is well documented in all western societies that those who hold lower levels of education tend to be more racist and particularly have the most negative views on immigrants. Therefore, it could be interesting to unearth the effects of educational level further to investigate the effects this factor has on Islamophobia in particular. This information would also be useful when employing certain preventative methods against Islamophobia within education.

Conclusion

The present study sought to identify whether gender, political affiliation and right-wing authoritarianism could significantly predict levels of Islamophobia. It was found that right-wing authoritarianism was the only factor which significantly predicted high levels of Islamophobia. This finding provides further evidence for right-wing authoritarianism being a strong predictor of racism and prejudicial attitudes. Therefore, it is recommended that other personality factors are investigated alongside the IS in order to gain further insight into this form of racism that is plaguing society. Further research will determine certain causal factors and demographic variables related to high levels of racism that will aid intervention strategies in the pursuit of reducing Islamophobia.

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