



The Role and Significance of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Global Issues: A Case Study of Islamophobia in France

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Abstract

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a significant role in addressing global issues such as the case study discussed in this research regarding Islamophobia in France. This study analyzes the role and significance of the OIC in tackling this issue using a qualitative literature research method by drawing upon sources from previous studies. By employing international organization theory, it can be concluded that the OIC can act as an extension of states in responding to global issues, in this case, Islamophobia in France, by assuming roles as an initiator, mediator, and facilitator. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of the efforts made by the OIC in addressing complex and sensitive global issues such as Islamophobia in France.

Keywords: Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Islamophobia, International Organization

Introduction

Islamophobia is a prominent topic in the international arena and represents a global concern, particularly for Muslims worldwide. This issue has arisen during the 1990s and has intensified owing to different occurrences, including acts of terrorism and the proliferation of negative stigma against Islam. Islamophobia is characterized by an irrational fear of Muslims or a manifestation of hostility and bigotry against Islam or Muslim culture. This significantly adversely affects Muslims, manifesting as physical and verbal assault, intimidation, and the enforcement of discriminatory regulations.

In recent years, Europe, especially France, has emerged as a significant center for rising Islamophobia. The nation has consistently attracted scrutiny for its contentious policies that disproportionately affect Islamic symbols and activities. A prominent example is the ban on Islamic symbols, including the headscarf, in public areas. This prohibition, grounded in France's commitment to its stringent secular policy termed *laïcité*, apparently seeks to maintain religious impartiality in public life. Critics contend that it has evolved into an instrument for diminishing the visibility and rights of the Muslim population, especially Muslim women who opt to wear the hijab. This policy has incited much controversy and debate both domestically and internationally, as it is viewed as a direct violation of the

religious freedoms of Muslims, prompting inquiries into the consistency of the nation's secularism with human rights principles (Basri, 2022)..

The ramifications of these regulations have been significant, leading to extensive discrimination against the Muslim community in France. Muslims, as one of the largest religious minorities in the nation, frequently encounter institutional marginalization across multiple domains, including employment, education, and political representation. Research demonstrates that Muslims in France face disproportionately elevated unemployment rates and workplace discrimination, with visibly identifiable Muslim women being especially susceptible. These challenges have exacerbated feelings of alienation and exclusion among French Muslims, eroding social cohesion and fostering a climate of suspicion between the Muslim minority and the wider French society.

A major impetus for these changes has been the French concept of *laïcité*. *Laïcité*, initially established to uphold the separation of church and state, has progressively been utilized to control and limit Muslim behaviors in public domains. This dynamic has grown under President Emmanuel Macron's administration. The Macron administration has implemented and endorsed policies that numerous individuals view as bolstering Islamophobic ideologies. In 2020, his administration introduced a contentious bill designed to address what was referred to as 'Islamist separatism'. The measure, while allegedly aimed at combating radicalization, has been attacked for its wording and implementation, which stigmatize the whole Muslim community. The legislation conferred upon authorities enhanced powers to surveil mosques, organizations, and educational institutions linked to Muslims, so intensifying the notion that Muslims are being targeted as a national security danger.

France's practices with its Muslim community have garnered extensive international criticism. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have denounced the policies as discriminatory and unhelpful. They contend that rather than promoting integration and mutual understanding, such policies exacerbate societal differences and incite Islamophobia. The United Nations has articulated concern, pushing France to align its policies with international human rights standards.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France extends beyond policy formulation, it is also profoundly ingrained in cultural perceptions. Public discourse frequently embodies adverse prejudices against Muslims, promoted by specific political figures and media organizations. These narratives perpetuate the marginalization of Muslims and foster a hostile climate that affects their daily life. The emergence of far-right rhetoric in France has intensified Islamophobic sentiments, portraying Muslims as incongruent with French values and identity. Shortly, France's policy of *laïcité*, especially during Macron's tenure, has emerged as a controversial matter that disproportionately impacts Muslims, fosters Islamophobia, and draws global attention. This circumstance highlights the pressing necessity for France to reevaluate its policies and dedication to maintaining human rights and social cohesion in a progressively varied country (Esmano & Miranda, 2022; Putri, 2023).

Prior research has examined the phenomenon of Islamophobia in Europe, particularly in France. Research by Amrad (2021) and Spurgeon (2019) emphasized the rise in physical and verbal violence directed toward Muslims in France, whereas Islamy & Andriyani (2021) examined the discriminatory policies enacted in the area. Monica (2021) and Rahayu & Achsin (2023) highlighted the reactions of Muslims to social and political pressures in France.



Nevertheless, these studies often focus solely on the direct effects of Islamophobia on the Muslim community or provide descriptions of discrimination without thoroughly examining the role of international organizations.

This article presents a novel perspective by examining the role and significance of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in addressing Islamophobia in France, in contrast to prior studies. This paper analyzes the OIC's strategic initiatives through the lens of international organization theory, elucidating the phenomena of Islamophobia and demonstrating how international actors might offer tangible and strategic answers to this problem. This methodology aims to address the existing gap in the literature and offer novel insights into the examination of Islamophobia and international organizations.

As the representative of 57 member nations with a majority of Muslims, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a significant role in combating Islamophobia. The OIC, as an international organization, seeks to eliminate discrimination, safeguard human rights, and promote global peace. The OIC demonstrates its importance in mitigating the effects of Islamophobia by initiatives such as facilitating discussion, mediating disputes, and promoting more inclusive policies (Putri & Imaduddin, 2021).

This essay seeks to examine the role and importance of the OIC in addressing the increase of Islamophobia in France. This paper analyzes the OIC's strategic maneuvers using international organization theory, offering a comprehensive insight into how the OIC addresses intricate global concerns. This article aims to enhance comprehension of initiatives addressing religious prejudice and developing worldwide solutions to Islamophobia.

Conceptual Framework

International Organization

This study primarily relies on the theory of international organization to analyze the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in addressing Islamophobia in France. This view emphasizes the function of international organizations as non-state entities capable of tackling transnational challenges that individual nations cannot handle. In this setting, international organizations like the OIC serve as initiators, mediators, and facilitators to develop more inclusive and successful solutions.

The framework of international organization theory will be utilized to elucidate how the OIC mobilizes resources, garners support from member states, and reconciles the interests of pertinent parties. This theory facilitates the analysis of how the OIC commenced first measures to combat Islamophobia through diverse policies and initiatives. This hypothesis serves to elucidate the OIC's role in alleviating tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, as well as between Muslim communities and the French government. This theory offers a framework for assessing the OIC's capacity to facilitate debate, conferences, and other mechanisms aimed at diminishing discrimination and enhancing understanding.

This study will evaluate the applicability of the idea of international organizations in a specific instance, namely Islamophobia in France. Consequently, the subsequent chapters will amalgamate this theory with empirical evidence to deliver a more thorough study of the efficacy and constraints of the OIC's role in confronting the issue of Islamophobia. This emphasis provides both theoretical insights and practical contributions to global policies addressing religious discrimination.

Research Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology utilizing a library research strategy. The primary references are derived from many secondary sources, including academic journals, books, organizational reports, and pertinent news stories. The sources are chosen for their credibility and relevance to the topic of Islamophobia in France and the function of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Data gathering was conducted through a literature research to discover patterns, facts, and arguments that substantiate the analysis of the OIC's role in addressing Islamophobia. The utilized data is secondary, comprising descriptive information on OIC policies and acts, statistics about Islamophobic incidents in France, and narratives chronicling the experiences of the Muslim community in France.

The obtained data will concentrate on several primary aspects, specifically the rise of Islamophobic occurrences in France, the policies and attitudes of the French government regarding the Muslim community, and the OIC's strategic measures in addressing the issue. Thematic analysis was conducted, categorizing the acquired data according to the principal topics pertinent to this study. This approach is recognizing patterns, correlations, and conflicts within the data to cultivate a more profound comprehension of the function and relevance of the OIC.

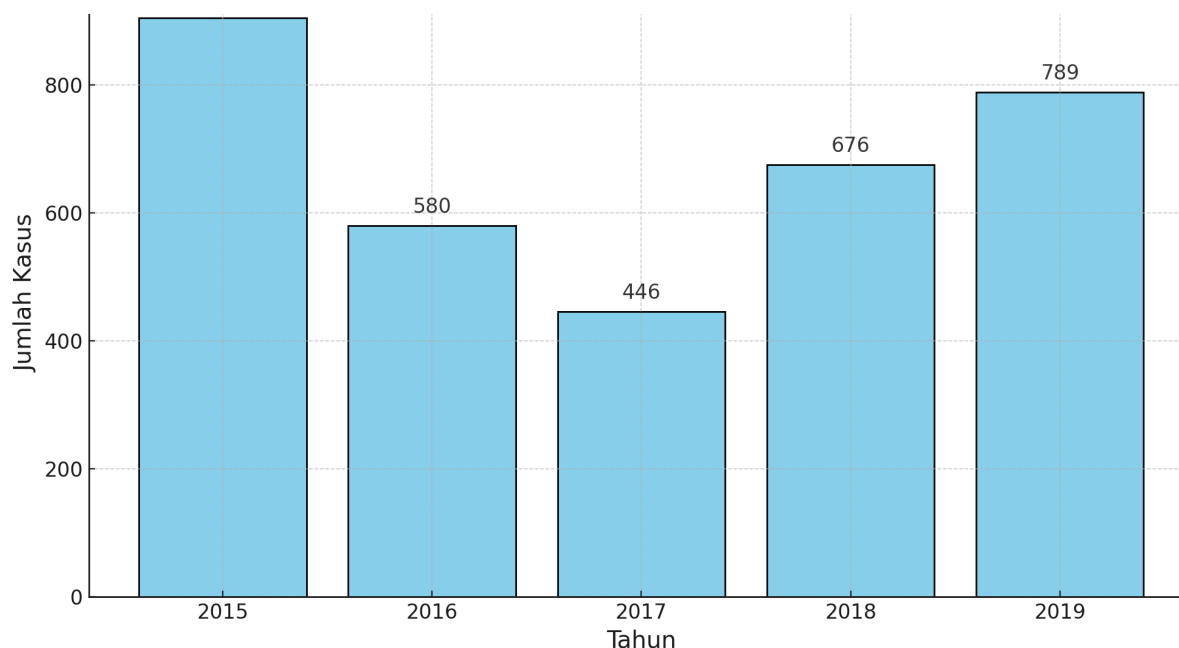
The findings of this analysis will address the research question concerning the efficacy and impact of the OIC in combating Islamophobia in France. This method aims to yield both theoretical and practical contributions to the domains of international relations and Islamophobia studies.

Finding and Discussion

The Rise of Islamophobia in France

The emergence of Islamophobia in France is a complicated issue influenced by a number of sociopolitical factors. In recent years, tensions and prejudice against the Muslim population in France have escalated. According to the research from the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), Islamophobia has been escalating, particularly in 2015, with a further increase observed in the subsequent three years: 2017, 2018, and 2019. In 2015, there were 905 occurrences of Islamophobia. In 2016, this figure decreased to 580 instances, representing a 35.9% reduction from the prior year. Between 2017 and 2019, the incidence of Islamophobic events in France escalated once more. In 2018, there were 676 instances of Islamophobia, representing a 52% increase from the 446 instances recorded the prior year. In 2019, there were 789 registered cases, reflecting a 17% rise from the prior year. The rise of Islamophobia in France became evident following the Arab Spring.

Figure 1. Trend of Islamophobia Cases in France in Year 2015-2019



Source: The data was analyzed by author (2022)

Aamrad (2021) asserted that the rising flow of immigrants to France has ignited a significant discourse over the nation's historical narrative. With the rise in immigration, the challenges encountered by the Muslim population in France have also escalated. Islamophobia has resurfaced in France. The rising prevalence of terrorism in France, frequently linked to Muslim groups, has intensified Islamophobic sentiments among the French populace. Immigrants exert a substantial influence on political, social, and cultural matters. Residing in this divide has resulted in cultural clashes, including the prejudiced attitudes of indigenous towards immigrants (Ismoyo, 2017).

According to Spurgeon (2019), mosques and other religious sites were the primary targets of Islamophobic assaults in France. According to a press release from the Ministry of the Interior, there were 63 incidents of Islamophobia in 2019, encompassing theft and physical assaults on individuals or property. Moreover, there were 91 additional Islamophobic events, encompassing threats such as anti-Muslim movements, pamphlets, and graffiti. The disparity between indigenous and immigrants generates social tensions that affect their interactions. This is evident in the discrimination against Muslim communities and other manifestations of racism. The political atmosphere intensifies this issue, as right-wing xenophobic movements resist the presence of immigrants, perceiving them as a threat to the stability of authentic French society.

Aamrad (2021) asserts that xenophobia is not a novel issue in French culture; the apprehension towards immigrants has consistently posed a threat to certain individuals, notably former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, recognized for his anti-immigrant stance. The issue of xenophobia then evolved into Islamophobia, a kind of racism targeting minority populations in France. Islamophobia had arisen prior to the surge of immigration following the Arab Spring. Nonetheless, Islamophobia has escalated along with the ascent of far-right

political factions, exacerbated by immigration. The emergence of far-right factions is frequently perceived as a racist phenomenon, with its rhetoric explicitly depicting Islam as a menace. Consequently, Islamophobia can be regarded as a manifestation of institutional racism that engenders prejudice detrimental to Muslims, while facilitating discrimination and exclusion.

Factors Influencing the Emergence of Negative Perspectives on Islam in France

Muslims have consistently encountered adverse perceptions and escalating sentiments in Europe. Negative sentiments and animosity within the indigenous European populace have escalated and worsened over time. Islamophobia in Europe, particularly in France, has manifested as dread, animosity, and discord amongst the indigenous European and French communities. Islamophobic occurrences in Europe, particularly in France, were precipitated by terrorist events, notably the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001, and intensified by the assault on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in central Paris in 2015. The terrorist occurrences of 2015 contributed to the ascendance of right-wing parties, which was a factor in the proliferation of Islamophobia in France. Right-wing parties have strengthened their dominance in prominent European nations, notably France, in recent years.

The emergence of a more robust right-wing movement aligns with several current issues in France. The emergence of these right-wing movements can be attributed to their manipulation of social issues frequently linked to national identity. Right-wing parties are seeing significant growth and resurgence throughout multiple European nations. A multitude of researchers regard these right-wing parties as efficacious. Right-wing parties are categorized as radicalism or extremism, populism, and nationalism. The National Front party in France is a resurgent right-wing political entity. This party has evolved into a formidable right-wing entity in France. Moreover, it is among the oldest right-wing parties in Europe.

The National Front encompasses various right-wing factions in France, including racism, nationalism, anti-fascism, and xenophobia. The National Front currently wields significant influence over public opinion. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Front, made incendiary remarks regarding Muslim immigration as a minority demographic, inciting significant controversy in Europe and France. Marine Le Pen's candid remarks during that period incited tensions within the French Muslim community. She employed the word "Laïcité" to marginalize or discriminate against Muslim immigrant populations in France. The swift increase of the Muslim immigrant demographic in France, coupled with the rising influence of French Muslim organizations, positions Muslim immigrants in Europe, particularly France, as a perceived threat to the foundational values of Christian civilization historically rooted in Europe.

The apprehension towards Muslims in this context has the potential to affect or even commandeer the existing political process, as well as to mold cognitive frameworks, widespread movements, and diverse forms of mass media (Amrad, 2021). Islamophobia in Europe, particularly in France, has emerged as a potent and tactical instrument employed by members of the Right Wing Party or the National Front to forward their goal. The Muslim community in France is evidently facing discontent and a deficiency of tranquility due to threats and discriminatory actions aimed at them. The Front National is recognized as a right-wing organization that is staunchly anti-immigration and frequently issues racist remarks that

promote Islamophobia. Marine Le Pen remarked that Muslims praying in the streets is prohibited and may lead to the appropriation of an area for religious purposes. Marine Le Pen's statement unintentionally exacerbated Islamophobia in France. Marine Le Pen's statement unintentionally incited animosity throughout French society towards Muslims (Basri, 2022). Marine Le Pen asserted in her remark that public prayer constitutes a form of labor. The essence of her assertion is unequivocal: an adversary is occupying French territory, and that adversary is Islam.

The Role of the OIC Based on Positions and Resolutions in Reducing Islamophobia in France

Considering the functions performed by the OIC as an organization dedicated to Islamic interests, particularly in light of the escalating negative stereotypes surrounding Islam due to adverse events or intentionally crafted agendas that foster a phenomenon termed Islamophobia. This article specifically addresses Islamophobia in France, beginning with an examination of the OIC's role as an international organization in fulfilling its responsibilities. The OIC, as an initiator, can significantly impact the community by introducing novel ideas, perspectives, and innovations in challenging circumstances. Additionally, it can foster change and innovation in prevailing social conditions and play a crucial role in shaping policies and decisions on the French agenda. In 2015, the animosity and racism exhibited were perpetuated not only by the French populace and media but also by the French government under Macron's administration, which exacerbated Islamophobia by intensifying repression against Muslims and pledging to exert greater pressure on the Muslim community, resulting in the arrest of over a dozen Muslims and the dissolution of several Muslim organizations (Ganley, 2020). The stance of the OIC initiator was evident during the 14th OIC session in 2019, initiated by Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, who vehemently criticized the media and President Macron for actions that incited Islamophobia. Subsequently, Prime Minister Khan addressed a letter to the leaders of all Muslim nations, urging them to enlighten the West about the significance of the Prophet Muhammad in their hearts and to convey the distress experienced by the Muslim community. This appeal garnered numerous positive responses from Islamic countries, including Turkey, Malaysia, the Gulf states, Kuwait, Jordan, and Libya (Pervaz & Asad, 2022), ultimately leading to various social movements advocating for the boycott of French products.

The OIC serves as a mediator to establish and cultivate trust among stakeholders, including the French populace, the French government, and the Muslim community in France. This role not only aims to foster trust but also to ensure security and peace among the involved parties. Through various discussions, including individual dialogues, each party is afforded the opportunity to articulate their positions, identify commonalities, and bridge existing differences. The endeavors of the OIC mediator are exemplified by the actions of Iyad Ameen Madani, the OIC leader, who publicly conveyed his condolences and extended assistance as a collaborative initiative by the Muslim community in confronting a succession of terrorist incidents, including the assault on the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo (Anandaru, 2021). The OIC serves as a facilitator, crucially enabling and promoting collaboration by offering a platform for communication, which may manifest as a venue for coordination among its member nations or other pertinent international players. The OIC's facilitator role can be concentrated on offering the requisite venues, tools, and support to improve engagement and attain the shared objective of safeguarding and enhancing the



reputation of the Islamic community, particularly in France. The OIC's initiatives as a facilitator in addressing Islamophobia encompass the organization of the Alliance of Civilizations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in May 2010, followed by a conference on religious tolerance in Astana, Kazakhstan, in the same year. In addition to facilitating discussions, the OIC provided health equipment for victims of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam. The OIC has continued to convene various conferences aimed at mitigating Islamophobia, including "Combating Islamophobia and Protecting Muslim Rights" in Turkey in 2015, "Embracing Diversity: Tackling Islamophobia" in Azerbaijan in 2019, and "Islamophobia: A Threat to Global Peace and Security" in France in 2020 (Azertac, 2024).

The Significance of the OIC in Responding to the Issue of Islamophobia in France

Islamophobia occurs in diverse forms throughout Europe, especially in France. According to the theory of international organizations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a crucial role in addressing this issue as an originator, mediator, and facilitator. The OIC, as a catalyst, utilizes its resources to highlight the issue of Islamophobia on a global scale. The OIC raises awareness of Islamophobia's impact and the necessity for collective response through awareness campaigns and international forums. An illustrative instance is the convening of international conferences, such as "Combating Islamophobia and Protecting Muslim Rights" in Turkey in 2015, which sought to establish a forum for member states to collectively address the issue. The OIC serves as a crucial mediator in alleviating tensions between the Muslim community and the French government. The OIC employs a collaborative diplomatic strategy to foster conversation among the interested parties. The OIC's mediation efforts can facilitate more inclusive solutions by including the opinions of diverse stakeholders. The OIC serves as a facilitator by offering tools and platforms to enhance collaboration among member states and other international entities. The OIC systematically conducts training programs, seminars, and panel discussions aimed at fostering tolerance and mitigating discrimination against Muslims. These measures facilitate enhanced comprehension at both local and global scales. Furthermore, the OIC serves as an advocate for articulating the issues of the Muslim community in international platforms, including the United Nations (UN). The OIC has effectively heightened awareness of the significance of addressing Islamophobia as an integral aspect of safeguarding human rights through its resolutions and proposed measures. An illustration is the worldwide initiative orchestrated by the OIC to confront the utilization of stereotypes in the media that incite bigotry against Muslims. The importance of the OIC is seen in its ability to mobilize political and moral resources to counteract adverse narratives regarding Islam. By serving as an intermediary between Muslim-majority nations and the global community, the OIC can enhance multilateral diplomacy to develop sustainable solutions. This aligns with the philosophy of international organizations, which underscores the significance of transnational collaboration to tackle intricate global challenges. Through these activities, the OIC mitigates the effects of prejudice against Muslims in France and significantly contributes to fostering a more equitable and inclusive international milieu. This strategic position illustrates how international organizations may be pivotal in tackling global issues like Islamophobia, while facilitating collaborative endeavors to foster global peace and stability.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the surge of Islamophobia in France and the role and importance of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) concerning this topic. Islamophobia has adversely affected the injustices faced by Muslim populations in the region. The prevalence of Islamophobia has significantly escalated in recent years. The rise of Islamophobia is attributed to terrorism and other events involving individuals who assert Muslim identity, resulting in adverse perceptions of the Islamic faith. Islamophobia has raised apprehensions among Muslims regarding the prejudice and oppression they endure, particularly given that Islam is a minority religion in Europe. Consequently, several acts of aggression and persecution have been perpetrated against Muslims in France. It can be argued that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a definitive role and holds relevance in addressing the issue of Islamophobia that has escalated in France. The OIC has assumed multiple roles in addressing Islamophobia, acting as a mediator, facilitator, and originator in its response to the issue in France. The OIC plays a substantial role in addressing Islamophobia by facilitating conversation, supporting Muslims, and advocating for legislative changes.

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