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اتجاهات الرأي العام العربي تجاه الرسوم الغربية للنبي محمد ﷺ: موقف الحكومة الفرنسية كدراسة حالة

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البحث الثامن

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Arab Public Attitudes towards Western Drawings of Prophet Muhammad: The French Government's position as a Case Study

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Abstract

The present study surveys the attitudes of Arab public opinions on the position of the French government concerning demeaning

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cartoons to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The study utilizes the descriptive approach and employs media dependence theory. The sample of the study consists of 2840 participants from various Arab countries. According to the results of the survey, respondents believed that the main reason for the French government's support for the demeaning cartoons is the apprehension of the spread of Islam. Another conclusion this study has attained is that in Arab public opinion, the French's government insensitivity to the demeaning cartoon of Prophet Muhammad is underlies a racist attribute.

Keywords: Muhammad cartoons , Islamophobia Stereotype

Introduction

In recent years, the crisis of demeaning cartoons began in Denmark and spread to several Western countries, including France. However, Offences directed to the position of the Prophet (PBUH) began from the EARLY beginnings of Islam in many forms. He was accused of sorcery, reciting poetry at the beginnings of Islam. In the Middle Ages, he was portrayed as a thief, a murderer, an infidel, a sorcerer and a charlatan who seeks to destroy the church and the virtues (Bū'izīzī, 2006)

In October 2020, the French teacher (Samuel Paty) was murdered by one of his students of the Chechen immigrants, after the teacher showed degrading cartoons in a French school. This led to widespread condemnation of that incident by Westerners and Muslims alike.

However, the feelings of anger and condemnation in France

soon turned into a hate campaign against Muslims, and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). Cartoon pictures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were hung on the walls of official buildings in Paris under the pretext of freedom of expression, with the personal support and blessing of the French President Emmanuel Macron who considered this act as part of the French values that will not be compromised. The French position in support of the demeaning cartoons sparked a wave of anger in the Muslim capital cities from Jakarta to Nouakchott, and that anger quickly turned into a popular boycott campaign of French goods.

Based on the context above, the present study aims to reveal the attitudes of the Arab public opinion towards the position of the French government in support of degrading cartoons offensive to the Prophet (PBUH).

Statement of the problem:

On the 30th of September 2005, the widely spread Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published twelve satirical and demeaning cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This act sparked popular Muslim anger and led to a campaign to boycott Danish goods. In 2006, the French weekly Charlie Hebdo republished these demeaning cartoons, and this aroused the anger of Muslims in France and the Islamic world. On January 7, 2015, the newspaper was attacked by young Moroccans, and twelve persons were killed. This act was declared as a terrorist attack that was condemned at several occasions in France and the world, including the Muslim and Arab worlds. Later, a French teacher named Samuel Paty displayed the demeaning cartoons to his

students, so one of the Chechen immigrant students murdered him in protest to what he displayed. This prompted the French president to honor the murdered teacher as a national hero and a martyr for the freedom of expression. Instantly, a hate campaign against Muslims in France broke out accusing Muslims in France of the liability for killing the French teacher and supporting his display of the demeaning cartoons in the classrooms before his students.

Although many official Islamic entities condemned the murder of the French teacher, hate campaigns continued against the Muslim community in France and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). On the other hand, Arab and Muslim public opinion did not stop defending the Messenger, interacting with the crisis, and educating people about what happened. Accordingly, it was necessary to study the attitudes of the Arab public opinion concerning the insensitive position of the French government towards the degrading cartoons. So, the main question of the study is:

What are the attitudes of the Arab public opinion regarding the position of the French government in support of the demeaning cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)?

The following sub-questions branch out of this question:

What are the motives of the French government for supporting the demeaning cartoons from the point of view of the study sample? What is the position of the Arab public opinion concerning the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products? What is the image of France in the Arab public opinion in light of

its position in support of the demeaning cartoons from the point of view of the study sample? What is the impact of the official French support for the demeaning cartoons on the French-Islamic relations from the point of view of the study sample? Are there statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the sample participants that can be attributed to the variables of (gender, religion, age, education and country)?

Objectives of the study

Identifying the reasons that motivates the French government to adopt the demeaning cartoons from the point of view of the sample. Revealing the position of the Arab public opinion regarding the Muslim boycott of French products. Identifying the mental image of France in the Arab public opinion in the light of its position in support of the demeaning cartoons from the point of view of the study sample. Assessing the impact of the French government's support for the demeaning cartoons on the French-Islamic relations from the point of view of the study sample. Measuring the statistically significant differences -if any- between the mean scores of the study sample that can be attributed to the variables (gender, religion, sect, age, education level, country).

Definition of terms:

1. Attitudes:

Linguistically, an attitude in Arabic refers to the destination or intent. Technically, it has many definitions according to the approach adopted by different researchers. Zahrān (1984, p. 136) defines it as “ a hypothetical formation, a latent or intermediate

variable (between the stimulus and the response), which denotes a psychological readiness or an acquired nervous mental preparation for response whether positive or negative to people, objects, subjects, or symbols in the environment that elicits this response”.

Bogardus defines it as “ the tendency to act, whether positively or negatively, towards a subject in the environment that implies positive or negative values for this behaviour.” Harry Upshow defines attitudes as “ the positions taken by individuals when facing issues and matters surrounding them”. (Cited in Şiddīq, 2012, pp. 301-302). A psychological attitude can be latent and covert, whereby the individual does not feel it, but it explains the behaviour of the individual in a certain way when facing a specific situation (‘Aṭīyah, 2010).

Based on the above definitions, the most important features of the attitude can be stated as follows:

It is a human tendency to respond to a stimulus. It could be negative or positive. It is an important factor in directing human behaviorist involves an assessment of a person or an event. It is affected by the social, cultural and political environment.

Accordingly, the procedural definition of the Arab public opinion attitudes is: the evaluative stands that directs the behavior of the Arab public opinion towards France as a result of its government’s support for the demeaning cartoons.

2. Public opinion

Webster’s Dictionary defines public opinion as «the

predominant opinion of a society», «the collective will of the people», or «the summation of public expression regarding a specific issue or event». Cambridge Dictionary defines it as «the ideas and beliefs that most people hold towards a specific subject». Technically, it has many definitions. James Bryce defines it as “ the sum of the opinions that people have towards issues and topics that concern and affect the group” (Cited in Al-Khar‘ān; 2000, p. 447). Aḥmad Abu Zaid defines it as “ the viewpoint of the majority of the people in a group, which is not second to any other viewpoint” (Cited in Sumaysim; 2004, p. 171).

The procedural definition of public opinion in the present study is “ the prevailing opinion of the majority of Arab peoples (represented by the study sample) towards the position taken by the French President Emmanuel Macron and his government in supporting and adopting the demeaning cartoons insulting the Prophet (PBUH), which were previously published by the Charlie Hebdo and which were displayed by the French teacher Samuel Paty to his students at school as a form of freedom of expression.

3. Mental image:

With the growing importance of the role played by public relations especially after the publication of the book *Developing the Corporate Image* in 1960 by the American writer Lee Bristol, many institutions realized the importance of presenting a positive image of themselves in the minds of their clients (‘Ajwah, 2003). The term mental image was then moved from the world of business to the world of media and politics, whereby it has received exceptional attention from politicians who always seek

to export a positive mental image of themselves to the public opinion. (Būdhān, 2018).

However, it is worth noting that the mental image of individuals is not assumed all the time, as it can change according to the changing of social events as well as political and cultural conditions. (Al-Dulaymī, 2013)

The present researchers define mental image procedurally in this study as “ the image that was formed in the minds of Arab peoples regarding France under President Emmanuel Macron after his support for the demeaning cartoons insulting the Prophet of Islam(PBUH) and declaring it an act within the freedom of expression and a fundamental part of the values of the French Republic.

4. Demeaning cartoons:

In the present study, these refer to the satirical cartoon published by the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo, which mocked the character of the Prophet Muhammad(PBUH)offensively, which were displayed by the French teacher Samuel Paty to his students in the classroom and which were hung on the walls of government buildings in Paris.

5. The campaign to boycott French products:

In the present study, this refers to the campaign launched by activists on social networks under the hashtag #Boycott_French_goods, and which the public opinion in the Arab and Muslim world interacted with.

6. The French government:

In the present study, we mean the government under President Emmanuel Macron who declared his support for these demeaning cartoons and considered them as freedom of expression and part of the «values of the French Republic», following the murder of a French teacher by one of his Chechnya immigrant students on October 16, 2020.

Methodology:

The descriptive-analytical approach is adopted for the present study. According to (Omar, 2008, p. 210), the concept of descriptive research covers “ the state of events, phenomena, attitudes, and opinions with analysis and interpretation in order to reach useful conclusions, either to correct, update, complete, or develop the state of the art.” Although description is the main objective of descriptive research, in most cases it goes beyond that and seeks to explain the phenomenon. (Al-Kharabsha, 2007).

Omar (2008, pp 211-212) indicates that there are several areas covered by the descriptive approach such as “ survey studies, interrelationship studies, and developmental studies, all of which are studies dealing with the state of the art of a phenomenon, whether this case is related to situations, groups, or event”.

Al-Nu‘aimī, Al-Bayatī, and Khalīfah (2009, p. 239) outline the steps that should be followed when carrying out descriptive research. These are: “ choosing a topic, reviewing literature, selecting the sample, collecting valid and reliable data, analyzing the data, and reporting results.”

Descriptive studies have a set of objectives: (Hijāb, 2003).

1. Describing the phenomena by collecting information and data, then analyzing and interpreting them.
2. Uncovering the relationships between the phenomenon and the variables that are related to it.
3. Analyzing the phases and stages of change that dominated the phenomenon in a specific period.

Based on these objectives and the definition of the descriptive approach, it is the most appropriate for the present study, as it is suitable for studying social and human phenomena, it analyzes the state of the art, and aims to identify the interrelationships within the phenomenon, as well as the variables related to it.

The study employs the descriptive approach as the most suitable approach to studying the human phenomena, their attitudes, opinions and viewpoints. Within the framework of this approach, the descriptive surveying method was used as the main data collection procedure for analyzing the views of mass media users and their reactions.

A questionnaire is designed as a data collection tool to provide answers to the questions of the study. The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp to available samples in various Arab countries, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Yaman, Libya and Algeria. The total number of correct questionnaires 2840 was then

processed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS) and the following statistical treatments were performed to reach answers to the study questions:

Frequency

Percentage

arithmetic mean

Standard Deviation

t-test

One way ANOVA

Scheffe Test

and LSD Test

Theoretical Background: Mass media dependency theory

Mass media dependency theory emerged in the seventies of the twentieth century. This theory was discussed in a research paper entitled “ The Concept of Information ” that focused on the potential of mass media to produce information, disseminate it, and frame it in an accessible to the public so as to fulfill their need for information.

The theory is based on the principle that mass media influence public opinion, especially it fulfills its prescribed roles, primarily conveying information effectively. (Al Mushāqbah, 2011). The theory also uncovers the reasons for the power of the media in influencing the public directly and indirectly (Mikāwī and al-Sayid, 2004). «Dependence on the media is based the relationship

between the goals and the available sources». When commenting on the relations between media and the state of stability in society, Devler and Rokich (1992) emphasize that instability in society intensifies the public's exposure to the media, as it increases the public's dependence on these means in order to obtain the needed information. The theory of dependence is one of the theories that monitor and analyze the effects of the various mass media on the individual and society. (Al-Ṭarābishī and Al-Sayid, 2006). According to (Ḥijāb, 2003), there are several hypotheses for this theory, the most important of which are:

The need for information increases during social instability, and this leads to an increase in the public's dependence on the mass media. The more the media can meet the needs of the public, the more the public depends on it, and vice versa. The public tends to depend on the media according to their goals, interests, and individual needs.

According to De Fleur et. al, there are three main types of effects resulting from the individuals' dependence on the media, which are cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects:

Cognitive Effects

A- Ambiguity: that is, the greater the mystery, the more people tend to depend on the media.

B –Attitude formation: the heavy dependence of the public on the media leads to the formation of new attitudes about current events in society. Media leaders tend to select some events and direct people's attention towards them.

C- Expanding the belief systems of the public: exposure to the media expands people's knowledge, and their belief systems become enriched as a result of obtaining more information about others and things.

(D) Clarifying values: the information presented by the media provides an explanation of the different values in society. This may cause a conflict and a clash between the different values of individuals and may lead individuals to review their values and reconsider them to determine which is the most important to them.

Emotional Effects:

These refer to the various feelings and emotions humans encounter mind, as the media helps individuals to form different emotional responses towards events and people.

Behavioral Effects:

A change in attitudes, feelings, and beliefs leads to a change in behavior, as the behavioral effects of an individual's dependence on the media lead to activation, or inactivity according to the nature of the media messages whether they lead the individual to a positive action or a negative action.

The researchers benefited from the theory of media dependence in their study as follows:

1.The theory was the framework for studying the attitudes of the Arab public opinion about the position of the French government in support of the demeaning cartoons to the Prophet Muhammad(PBUH)in terms of the emotional and behavioral

effects adopted according to the information obtained by the public from the mass media resources, including social media networks which played a significant role in the boycott of French goods through the hashtag #Boycott_French_Products.

2. It explained the increase of the Arab public's dependence on the media during the cartoon crisis. This helped us to identify the dimensions and details of that crisis and how they formed their attitudes towards it.

3. The hypotheses of the theory helped explain the clash of cultural values between the Arab public opinion, which views cartoons as an insult to the Prophet (PBUH), and the French public opinion which views them as freedom of expression.

A brief history of offences directed to the prophet (PBUH)

Attacking the character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is not a new thing, as it has been throughout history in different ways of abuse that started with the senior opponents in Mecca, such as AbīJahl, AbīLahab, Al-Walīd ibn Al-Mughīrah among others. Such an attack did not stop after the prophet's migration to Medina. It was rather carried out by the Munāfiqīn (hypocrites). In the past, the demeaning attack was focused on three types: mockery of Islam, ridicule of the prophet's personality, and mockery of the Qur'ān (Kassāb, 2020).

In the Middle Ages, Europeans were overwhelmed by a sense of the apocalypse, and their view of Islam was extremely negative, driven by the writings of the Church based on the prophecies of the Old Testament. They interpreted all prophecies concerning the

Antichrist as embodied in the character of Muhammad (PBUH). The impact of these writings was then transmitted to the public who formed a very negative image of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that prevailed among the West the effect of which is still present till today. (Suthern, 2006, 14). This negative view was further exacerbated by what was falsely reported by some wandering priests in the Islamic world, about the existence of Islamic paganism and multiple gods. This view continued to the end of the medieval ages. (Suthern, 2006).

A slight change happened in the modern era with regard to the image of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the West due to the publication of a number of objective non-prejudiced studies, the modern interface between the West and the Islamic world, and because of the tendency of the Western civil society to study Islam without bias. In addition to the exposure of Western scholars to the original Islamic references and sources. (Idrīsī, 2010) However, this does not mean that things have completely changed, as there are still orientalist, researchers and media institutions that deal with Islamic issues with racism and bias. Moreover, they study Islam with prejudice and try always to provoke Muslims to keep the antagonism between them and the West.

The repeated attempts to offend the Messenger of Islam (PBUH) through the demeaning cartoons represent the utmost provocation to the religious feelings of Muslims. The first demeaning attack was on the 30th of September 2005 when the widespread Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published twelve satirical cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

attached to an article entitled “ The Face of Muhammad” by the journalist Kurt Westergaard. (Al-Dulaymī,2011).

This publication led to angry reactions from Muslims first in Denmark, then in the Muslim world, which culminated that anger with calls to boycott Danish goods. Angry demonstrations broke out in the Muslim world and some Western cities. To show their sympathy and support with the Danish newspaper, French and other European newspapers republished these offensive cartoons, which accelerated the anger in the Muslim world, and ascertained a growing feeling of international complicity that aimed at offending the Prophet (PBUH) and distorting the image of Islam and Muslims in the whole world. As a result, the Danish embassies in Beirut and Damascus were burned, and the boycott campaign of Danish goods was a great success. (Amīn, 2013).

In 2006, the French weekly Charlie Hebdo republished the demeaning cartoons, which aroused feelings of anger among Muslims in France and the Muslim world. This led to some avenging acts like burning the place of the newspaper, attacking the personnel and the murder of 12 persons on January 7, 2015. This was described as a terrorist attack that was widely condemned by many officials in the Islamic world and the international community.

However, provocations did not stop there, as the American weekly Houston Press in Texas published an advertisement for a pornographic film entitled “ The Sexual Life of the Prophet Muhammad”, and despite the demonstrations and protests that swept the Islamic world, the film was displayed (Al-'Umar, 2021).

In the eighties of the last century, Jerry Falwell, author of the book *Let's Advance to the Battle of Armageddon*, portrayed a false biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) full of distortion, insults, and offences. (Ibid)

And after the events of September 11, the campaigns against Islam increased, including the smearing campaigns against the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci confirmed that the West is living in a real crusade with the Muslim world. (Ibid)

At a later time, a French teacher named Samuel Paty displayed to his students the demeaning cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), so one of his students, apparently from Chechnya immigrants, killed him in protest against the display of those cartoons. Instantly, there was a fierce campaign in France and other countries that condemn the murder of the teacher and support the demeaning cartoons without distinguishing between the crime of murder and the crime of insulting the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). Even though the majority of Muslims condemned the murder, still official and popular campaigns continued with the pretext that abusing religious symbols is a form of freedom of expression in France that should be untouchable. At the same time, the French laws punish the mere questioning of the numbers of dead Jews of the Holocaust under any pretext. Likewise, the majority of Western countries consider any criticism of the Jews or of the Zionist movement to be an anti-Semitic crime, no matter how objective that criticism is. This for Muslim peoples is a form of double standards.

In this context, and in a report by Amnesty International entitled “ France is not a supporter of freedom of expression as it claims,” Perolini, a researcher at Amnesty International for Europe, points out that the reaction of the French President Emmanuel Macron and his government following the murder of the teacher, was not balanced. Perolini emphasized in his article that the French government “ is not a supporter of freedom of expression as it claims, in 2019 a French court convicted two men of contempt after they burned an effigy of President Macron during a peaceful demonstration, ”In addition, “ through a bill being prepared on what Macron called “ enlightenment Islam” and “ fighting Islamic isolationism”, he seeks to prepare French imams who accept the idea of insulting their Prophet (PBUH) as a freedom of expression, and seeks to reduce the influence of French Muslim families in raising their children according to their own beliefs and culture” (Perolini, 2020).

Findings:

It is worth noting that the number of the sample participants from Kuwait was equivalent to almost half of the overall number of samples despite the small population of Kuwait as compared to the rest of the Arab countries. This can be attributed to a number of factors; key among them is that the first author is from Kuwait whereby he posted the questionnaire on his Twitter account and his students, therefore, participated enthusiastically. In addition, the campaign to boycott French products started in Kuwait, whereby it was launched by many cooperative societies with the support of religious and political figures and celebrities of social

media. Third, this public reaction was in accordance with the official position of the State of Kuwait expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it summoned the French ambassador to inform her of Kuwait's official rejection of the French position offensive to religions. These three factors altogether encouraged the Kuwaiti public to interact with the campaign exceptionally and enthusiastically.

Findings of the first question

The first question of the study sought to identify the reasons behind the French government's adoption of the demeaning cartoons offensive to the Messenger (PBUH). Findings showed that: (apprehension of the spread of Islam) was the main reason for the French government's support of the demeaning cartoons according to the study sample's point of view. The other reasons were the deliberate insult to Islam, the restriction on religious freedom for Muslims in France. We can induce from the participants' responses that fear is the main factor in leading people to misunderstanding and clash. This coincides with the study by Dandan in 2011 in which he pointed out that the state of Islam and Muslims in France at the present time is governed by the phenomenon of Islamophobia especially after the right-wing came to power.

Findings of the second question

The second question sought to identify the position of the Arab public opinion regarding the campaign of Muslims boycotting French products. Results showed that this act was viewed in the

first place as evidence of the Muslims' love and support for the Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). It was also viewed secondly as an act to pressure France to respect the beliefs of Muslims and to increase the awareness of the Muslims about their identity.

This result can be explained as a reflection of the status of the Prophet (PBUH) in the hearts of Muslims, who consider him as a red line that may not be approached or abused in any way. Raising awareness of Muslim's religious identity is compatible with the theory of media dependence theory, as this theory proposes that any ambiguity or crises that afflicts society makes individuals more dependent on the media, and this naturally leads to an increase in people's awareness of this issue. This finding is consistent with the results of Būriq'ah, 2016.

Findings of the third question:

The third question sought to uncover the image of France in the Arab public opinion after its position in support of the demeaning cartoons from the point of view of the study sample. Results showed that these events showed the racist face of France, that the French government encourages hate speech against Muslims, and that this recalled the old colonial image of France. This finding is in line with the theory of media dependence, which proposes that media dependence leads to the formation of new attitudes towards the current events in the community. This is what happened when the Arab media, including social media, concentrated on the issue of the demeaning cartoons and the position of the French government supporting them. This badly affected the image of France in the mind of the Arab citizen.

Findings of the fourth question

The fourth question attempted to measure the effect of the French support for the demeaning cartoons on the French-Islamic relations from the point of view of the sample members. Findings showed that such support damaged the Muslim community residing in France, the cultural relations between the French people and the Muslim peoples, and the economic relations between France and the Islamic countries, among other areas of damage. This is also consistent with the emotional effects that the theory of media dependence proposes. Exposure to media messages helps individuals to develop emotional responses towards different events and entities. These events created negative emotional feelings between the French people and the Muslim peoples.

Findings of the fifth question

The fifth question sought to assess whether there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample due to the variables of gender, religion, age, education level, or country. Results showed that male participants were more aware of the issue of the French government's adoption of the demeaning cartoons as well as of the image of France in the Arab public opinion, Female participants, however, showed higher awareness of the position of the Arab public opinion regarding the Muslim boycott of French products. This may be due to women's natural inclination to follow market trends and act quickly according to what they believe in.

Conclusions:

By analyzing the results of the study, it is clear that the main reasons, from the samples perspectives, for the French government adoption of the demeaning cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are: 1. the fear of the spread of Islam or Islamophobia, 2. the French government deliberate abuses to distort the image of Islam in the minds of the French, and 3. To restrict religious freedom of Muslims in France, which

contradicts the claims of the French government, which claims to adhere to freedom of expression and the protection of the values of the French Republic.

It is quite noticeable to observe a correlation between the fear of the spread of Islam or Islamophobia on the one hand and the restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims, and the distortion of the image of the Islamic religion on the other. We suggest that the motive of fear of the spread of Islam will lead to restrictions on the Muslim community whose members are active in calling for Islam. In addition, the organized campaigns to distort the image of Islam from time to time will contribute to forming a psychological barrier between the French people and Islam to limit their conversion to it.

This will also make the Muslim community in France in a state of self-defense instead of being preoccupied with spreading the Islamic message among the French. The study sample noted that the position of the French government has stirred up French public opinion against Muslims and harmed the Muslim community there.

Moreover, study results show the French position towards the demeaning cartoons led to a great loss, as France lost a considerable part of its reputation as a democratic country that respects religious freedoms and preserves the rights of minorities. In addition, this crisis showed the racist face of France, and brought to mind its colonial past. Furthermore, the boycott campaign caused damage to the French economy. Undoubtedly, this is not a small loss, and the French state may need years to repair that damage, provided that it abandons its current policy and builds new bridges between it and the Muslim peoples.

Based on this, three conclusions can be drawn. First: The French government's position with regard to the demeaning cartoons has contributed to a large extent in reviving the religious feelings of Muslims and increased their awareness and adherence to their cultural identity. It also contributed to restoring Muslims' confidence in themselves, especially after the successful economic boycott of French goods at the beginning of the crisis. This is what forced the French President Macron to appear on the Arabic channel Al-Jazeera to justify the position of his government to the Arab audience, which is a defensive position that indicates the weakness of the French position in front of the strength of Islamic public opinion.

Second: Social networks played a pivotal role in mobilizing the Arab public opinion against France and played a major role in the success of the boycott of French products.

Third: The media role played a serious role that affected the civilizational relations between nations and peoples. With

the development of communication technology, it is no longer possible to limit local incidents to their local scope, especially if they are related to the religions to which millions of people around the world belong.

Therefore, it is not acceptable to consider defamation of religion a purely local matter subject to the French law under the pretext of freedom of expression or the protection of French values. One act against religious belief in a country will not be limited to that country but will extend to many other countries and peoples and will cause international crises, as this study has proven, supported by the results of many other previous studies that dealt with the Danish degrading cartoons.

In accordance with the findings of the study, the authors suggest conducting the following further studies: the impact of the French government's adoption of the demeaning cartoons on the Muslim community in France. The impact of the demeaning cartoons insulting the Prophet (PBUH) on the Islamic-Western civilizational relations. The role of social media in cultural and cross-cultural conflicts.

Recommendations:

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

Muslim governments and civil organizations should demand the French government to respect the Islamic faith, desist from insulting the position of the Prophet (PBUH), and restrain hate speech against Muslims.

Demanding the French government to sustain religious freedom for the Muslim community in France. Refusal to consider insulting religious beliefs as part of freedom of expression. Conducting awareness campaigns in Western countries to introduce the morals of the Prophet (PBUH) and his position for Muslims. Urging leaders of the Muslim world to defend the position of Prophet (PBUH) and to criminalize the abuse of religions in international conventions. Encouraging an Islamic-Western dialogue at all levels that prioritizes strategic interests over racist discourses.

SPSS data Analysis: Tables 1-15

Table (1)

Sample demographic description

Variables	Category	No.	Percentage
gender	male	1282	45.10%
	female	1558	54.90%
religion	Muslim	2828	99.60%
	Non-Muslim	12	.400%
age	28-18	1290	45.40%
	29-39	611	21.50%
	50-40	488	17.20%
	51	451	15.90%
Level of education	secondary	465	16.40%
	diploma	390	13.70%

	BA	1520	53.50%
	Grad studies	465	16.40%
countries	Kuwait	1388	48.90%
	Saudi Arabia	460	16.20%
	Egypt	424	14.90%
	Jordan	110	3.90%
	Iraq	85	3.00%
	Algeria	50	1.80%
	Qatar	60	2.10%
	UAE	41	1.40%
	Libya	148	5.20%
	Yemen	34	1.20%
	Syria	40	1.40%

Tool of the Study:

Internal consistency validity:

Table (2)

Correlation coefficient between each dimension and the total score of the questionnaire

Dimension	Correlation
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	** 0.669
The position of Arab public opinion regarding the campaign of Muslims' boycott of French products	** 0.721

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The image of France in the Arab public opinion after its support to the abusive cartoons insulting the Prophet (PBUH)	** 0.629
The impact of the French support to the abusive offensive cartoons on the Islamic-French relations	** 0.706

Reliability of the questionnaire:

Table (3)

Correlation coefficient of the questionnaire reliability

Dimension	Correlation
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	0.73
The position of Arab public opinion regarding the campaign of Muslims' boycott of French products	0.71
The image of France in the Arab public opinion after its support to the abusive cartoons insulting the Prophet (PBUH)	0.76
The impact of the French support to the abusive offensive cartoons on the Islamic-French relations	0.72
The questionnaire overall	0.76

Statistical Treatment:

The data were treated through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the following statistical styles were performed, in order to answer the questions of the study:

Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviation, t-test, one-way ANOVA, Scheffe test, and LSD test.

Findings of the study:

Table (4)

Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages of the responses of the study sample to the reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons offensive to the Messenger (PBUH)

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Apprehension of the spread of Islam.	58.98	20.05	4.42	4.74	11.81	4.10	1.37	1
2	Defending freedom of expression.	14.97	14.65	11.64	23.80	34.94	2.51	1.46	6
3	Ignorance of the status of the Prophet Muhammad among Muslims.	38.25	18.63	6.97	13.05	23.11	3.36	1.63	5
4	Deliberate offence to Islam.	62.46	16.22	3.26	3.65	14.41	4.09	1.45	2
5	Restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims in France.	58.73	19.65	4.84	4.56	12.23	4.08	1.38	3
6	Prioritizing electoral interests over strategic interests with Islamic countries.	40.78	26.82	17.26	7.28	7.85	3.85	1.25	4

Table (5)

Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages of the responses of the sample concerning the position of the Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims boycott of French

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products

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Evidence of Muslims' love and support for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	77.86	16.78	2.68	1.66	1.02	4.69	0.70	1
2	It forced France to respect the faith of Muslims.	71.12	20.94	4.37	2.40	1.16	4.58	0.78	2
3	It is an appropriate response to France's support for the abusive cartoons.	50.50	25.92	9.17	7.15	7.26	4.05	1.24	8
4	It contributed to strengthening the unity of Muslims.	52.51	33.72	8.72	3.78	1.27	4.32	0.88	5
5	It increased the world's respect for Muslims.	49.77	31.99	12.77	3.95	1.52	4.25	0.93	6
6	It increased the awareness of Muslims of their religious identity.	52.93	34.89	7.84	3.25	1.09	4.35	0.84	3
7	It emphasized the strength of Islamic public opinion.	53.55	33.67	8.08	3.49	1.20	4.35	0.86	4
8	It negatively affected the French economy.	49.45	32.71	11.21	5.01	1.62	4.23	0.95	7
9	It hurt the economies of the boycotting countries more than France.	18.31	16.22	18.31	30.00	17.14	2.89	1.37	9

Table (6)

Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages of the responses of the sample concerning the Arab public opinion towards the image of France after supporting the abusive cartoons

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Rank
1	It reflects the racist face of France.	69.71	21.21	5.14	2.41	1.53	4.55	0.82	1
2	It restored the old colonial image of France.	55.83	27.15	11.41	4.19	1.42	4.32	0.93	3
3	The French government encourages hate speech against Muslims.	60.16	25.94	6.82	3.09	3.98	4.35	1.01	2
4	France remains a friendly country.	3.80	6.57	19.04	32.18	38.40	2.05	1.08	4
5	France is a model of religious tolerance.	3.41	3.44	9.12	27.12	56.90	1.69	1.01	5

Table (7)

Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages of the responses of the sample concerning the impact of the French government's support of the abusive cartoons on French-Muslim relations

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Rank
1	It harmed the cultural relations between the French people and the Muslim peoples.	40.53	34.37	13.48	8.52	3.10	4.01	1.08	2
2	It harmed the Muslim community residing in France.	42.59	35.93	12.22	6.45	2.81	4.09	1.03	1
3	It damaged the political relations between the French government and the Islamic governments.	26.69	26.65	22.08	19.08	5.50	3.50	1.22	5
4	It damaged the economic relations between France and the Muslim countries.	32.49	35.24	17.89	10.85	3.53	3.82	1.11	3

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5	It reflected the need for an Islamic-French dialogue.	29.69	34.69	18.22	11.47	5.93	3.71	1.18	4
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Table (8)

The results of (t) test for independent samples to test the differences between the means of the study sample concerning the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the variable of gender

Dimension	gender	No.	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Sig.
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	male	1282	22.37	5.35	4.502	2838	0.0001
	female	1558	21.42	5.78			
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	male	1282	37.24	5.49	3.378	2838	0.001
	female	1558	37.93	5.38			
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	male	1282	17.07	2.87	4.147	2838	0.0001
	female	1558	16.62	2.82			
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	male	1282	18.60	4.42	3.026	2838	0.0001
	female	1558	19.10	4.36			

Table (9)

The results of (t) test for independent samples to test the differences between the means of the study sample concerning the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons

according to the variable of religion

Dimension	gender	No.	Mean	SD	t- value	df	Sig.
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	Muslim	2828	21.86	5.61	1.298	2838	0.194
	Non-Muslim	12	19.75	4.65			
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	Muslim	2828	37.66	5.38	5.908	2838	0.0001
	Non-Muslim	12	28.42	9.56			
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	Muslim	2828	16.83	2.84	1.611	2838	0.107
	Non-Muslim	12	15.50	4.58			
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	Muslim	2828	18.90	4.38	3.661	2838	0.0001
	Non-Muslim	12	14.25	5.05			

Table (10)

Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to compare the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample about the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the age variable

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Dimension	age	N	Mean	SD	S. of variance	Sums of squares	df	Mean of squares	F- value	Sig.
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	18-28	1290	20.93	5.87	Between groups	2225.54	3	741.85	24.16	0.0001
					Inter-groups	87064.84	2836	30.70		
					Inter-groups	89290.37	2839			
					Total					
	29-39	611	22.12	6.03						
	50-40	488	22.87	4.87						
	51 +	451	22.99	4.46						
	total	2840	21.85	5.61						
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	28-18	1290	37.39	5.88	Between groups	598.28	3	199.43	6.78	0.0001
					Inter-groups	83378.68	2836	29.40		
					Inter-groups	83976.96	2839			
					Total					
	29-39	611	38.48	5.09						
	50-40	488	37.48	5.44						
	51+	451	37.25	4.36						
	total	2840	37.62	5.44						
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	28-18	1290	16.33	3.10	Between groups	588.13	3	196.05	24.76	0.0001
					Inter-groups	22455.71	2836	7.92		
					Inter-groups	23043.85	2839			
					Total					
	29-39	611	17.20	2.83						
	50-40	488	17.16	2.53						
	51 +	451	17.35	2.15						
	total	2840	16.82	2.85						
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	28-18	1290	18.99	4.57	Between groups	648.19	3	216.06	11.31	0.0001
					Inter-groups	54203.69	2836	19.11		
					Inter-groups	54851.88	2839			
					Total					
	29-39	611	19.53	4.03						
	50-40	488	18.50	4.37						

	51 +	451	18.06	4.25						
	total	2840	18.88	4.40						

Table (11)

The results of (Scheffe) test for the differences between the means of the study sample concerning the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the age variable

Dimension	Age	28-18	29-39	50-40	51 +
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	28-18		1.18606*	1.93502*	2.06157*
	29-39			0.74896	0.87551
	50-40				0.12654
	51 +				
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	28-18		1.09918*	0.09834	0.134717
	29-39			1.00085*	1.23390*
	50-40				0.233052
	51 +				
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	28-18		0.87254*	0.83680*	1.02764*
	29-39			0.035738	-0.15509
	50-40				-0.19083

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	51 +				
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	28-18		0.53562	0.490974	.93537*0
	29-39			1.02659*	1.47099*
	50-40				0.4444
	51 +				

(*) = Significant at 0.05

Table (12)

Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to compare the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample about the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the education variable

Dimension	Education	N	Mean	SD	S. of variance	Sums of squares	df	Mean of squares	F-value	Sig.
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	Sec. -	465	20.13	6.71	Between groups	2361.29	3	787.10	25.68	0.0001
					Inter-groups	86929.08	2836	30.65		
					Total	89290.37	2839			
	Dip.	390	21.06	6.14						
	BA	1520	22.26	5.29						
	Grad	465	22.88	4.38						
	total	2840	21.85	5.61						

The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	Sec. -	465	37.22	6.54	Between groups Inter-groups Total	545.06 83431.89 83976.96	3 2836 2839	181.69 29.42	6.78	0.0001
	Dip.	390	38.03	5.84						
	BA	1520	37.88	4.97						
	Grad	465	36.81	5.26						
	total	2840	37.62	5.44						
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	Sec. -	465	16.17	3.80	Between groups Inter-groups Total	283.78 22760.06 23043.85	3 2836 2839	94.59 8.03	24.76	0.0001
	Dip.	390	16.77	3.16						
	BA	1520	16.91	2.62						
	Grad	465	17.23	1.93						
	total	2840	16.82	2.85						
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	Sec. -	465	18.77	4.90	Between groups Inter-groups Total	202.79 54649.09 54851.88	3 2836 2839	67.60 19.27	11.31	0.015
	Dip.	390	18.75	4.95						
	BA	1520	19.09	4.21						
	Grad	465	18.37	3.91						
	total	2840	18.88	4.40						

Table (13)

The results of (Scheffe) test for the differences between the means of the study sample concerning the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the education variable

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Dimension	Education	Sec. -	Dip.	BA	Grad
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	Sec. -		-0.93292	-2.12408*	-2.75269*
	Dip.			-1.19116*	-1.81977*
	BA				-0.62861
	Grad				
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	Sec. -		0.809677	0.155702	1.222581
	Dip.			-0.1557	1.066879*
	BA				-1.06688*
	Grad				
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	Sec. -		0.595037*	-0.14064*	-0.45658*
	Dip.			0.140638	-0.31594
	BA				0.315938
	Grad				
	Sec. -		0.02804	-0.31989	0.404301
	Dip.			-0.34793	0.376261
	BA				0.724186*
	Grad		-0.93292	-2.12408*	-2.75269*

(*) = Significant at 0.05

Table (14)

Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to compare the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample about the position of the French government in favor of the abusive cartoons according to the country variable

Dimension	Country	N	Mean	SD	S. of variance	Sums of squares	df	Mean of squares	F-value	Sig.
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	Kuwait	1388	21.80	5.62	Between groups Inter-groups Total	835.85 88454.52 89290.37	10 2829 2839	83.59 31.27	2.67	0.003
	Saudi Arabia	460	22.27	5.16						
	Egypt	424	20.82	6.52						
	Jordan	110	22.20	5.12						
	Iraq	85	21.54	4.88						
	Algeria	50	22.16	5.57						
	Qatar	60	22.80	5.49						
	UAE	41	22.71	5.23						
	Libya	148	22.97	4.60						
	Yemen	34	21.85	6.19						
	Syria	40	22.33	4.74						
	Total	2840	21.85	5.61						
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	Kuwait	1388	37.90	5.32	Between groups Inter-groups Total	1021.37 82955.58 83976.96	10 2829 2839	102.14 29.32	3.48	0.0001
	Saudi Arabia	460	37.51	5.46						
	Egypt	424	37.39	5.82						
	Jordan	110	36.76	6.12						
	Iraq	85	35.38	5.84						
	Algeria	50	37.44	5.97						
	Qatar	60	38.58	5.10						
	UAE	41	38.46	5.99						
	Libya	148	37.43	4.36						
	Yemen	34	39.44	3.96						
	Syria	40	35.55	4.18						
	Total	2840	37.62	5.44						

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The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	Kuwait	1388	16.76	2.95	Between groups Inter-groups Total	131.96 22911.89 23043.85	10 2829 2839	13.20 8.10	1.79	0.092
	Saudi Arabia	460	17.15	2.70						
	Egypt	424	16.52	3.09						
	Jordan	110	16.75	2.60						
	Iraq	85	16.65	2.63						
	Algeria	50	16.88	2.43						
	Qatar	60	16.82	2.35						
	UAE	41	17.24	2.50						
	Libya	148	17.05	2.54						
	Yemen	34	16.91	2.44						
	Syria	40	17.50	1.99						
	Total	2840	16.82	2.85						
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	Kuwait	1388	19.05	4.36	Between groups Inter-groups Total	567.12 54284.76 54851.88	10 2829 2839	56.71 19.19	3.51	0.001
	Saudi Arabia	460	18.91	4.54						
	Egypt	424	18.78	4.60						
	Jordan	110	18.16	4.14						
	Iraq	85	17.96	3.31						
	Algeria	50	19.34	4.62						
	Qatar	60	19.50	3.65						
	UAE	41	20.76	2.97						
	Libya	148	17.69	4.77						
	Yemen	34	18.74	4.67						

	Syria	40	18.45	3.48					
	Total	2840	18.88	4.40					

Table (15)

Results of the (LSD) test for the differences between the means of the study sample concerning the position of the French government in favour of the abusive cartoons according to the country variable

Dimension	I	J	Mean difference I-J	Sig.	
Reasons for the French government's adoption of the abusive cartoons	Kuwait	Egypt	0.980398*	0.002	
		Libya	-1.16506*	0.016	
	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	1.444463*	0.000	
		Egypt	Jordan	-1.37925*	0.021
			Qatar	-1.97925*	0.010
		UAE	-1.88656*	0.039	
		Libya	-2.14546*	0.000	
The position of Arab public opinion towards the campaign of Muslims to boycott French products	Kuwait	Jordan	1.13694*	0.034	
		Iraq	2.524106*	0.000	
		Syria	2.350576*	0.007	
	Saudi Arabia	Iraq	2.136573*	0.045	
		Yemen	-1.92813*	0.028	
		Syria	1.963043*	0.034	
		Egypt	Yemen	-2.04967*	0.040
			Syria	1.841509*	0.036

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	Jordan	Qatar	-1.8197*	0.012
		Yemen	-2.67754*	0.033
	Iraq	Algeria	-2.06353*	0.000
		Qatar	-3.20686*	0.003
		UAE	-3.08694*	0.005
		Libya	-2.04921*	0.000
		Yemen	-4.06471*	0.010
The image of France in Arab public opinion after its support for the abusive cartoons	Kuwait	البحرين	-0.39498*	0.001
	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	0.633121*	0.050
	Egypt	Libya	-0.53283*	0.038
		Syria	-0.97877*	0.042
The impact of French support for offensive cartoons on Islamic-French relations	Kuwait	Jordan	0.883914*	0.027
		Iraq	1.082845*	0.014
		UAE	-1.70855*	0.000
		Libya	1.358361*	0.010
	Saudi Arabia	UAE	-1.84523*	0.003
		Libya	1.22168*	0.006
	Egypt	UAE	-1.97544*	0.009
		Libya	1.091471*	0.001
	Jordan	UAE	-2.59246*	0.038
	Iraq	Qatar	-1.53529*	0.001
		UAE	-2.79139*	0.021
	Algeria	Libya	1.650811*	0.007

	Qatar	Libya	1.810811*	0.000
	UAE	Libya	3.066908*	0.047
		Yemen	2.020803*	0.018
		Syria	2.306098*	0.001

(*) = Significant at 0.05

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اتجاهات الرأي العام العربي تجاه الرسوم الغربية للنبي محمد ﷺ: موقف الحكومة الفرنسية كدراسة حالة

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هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن اتجاهات الرأي العام العربي حول موقف الحكومة الفرنسية المؤيد للرسوم الكرتونية المسيئة للرسول محمد ﷺ، استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي، ووظفت نظرية الاعتماد على وسائل الإعلام، وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 2840 فرداً من عدد من الدول العربية، وتوصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من النتائج أهمها أن السبب الرئيس لدعم الحكومة الفرنسية للرسوم الكرتونية المسيئة للرسول ﷺ - من وجهة نظر عينة الدراسة - هو الخوف من انتشار الإسلام، وأن موقف الرأي العام العربي من حملة مقاطعة المسلمين للمنتجات الفرنسية قوي مما يدل على حب المسلمين ونصرتهم لنبيهم. وأظهرت الدراسة الوجه العنصري لفرنسا لدى الرأي العام العربي بحسب غالبية آراء أفراد العينة. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من التوصيات أهمها:

(١) أستاذ الإعلام الإسلامي المساعد بقسم العقيدة والدعوة بكلية الشريعة والدراسات الإسلامية بجامعة الكويت منذ ٢٠٠٣. حاصل على شهادة الدكتوراه في دراسات الإعلام من جامعة ساسيكس بالملكة المتحدة عام ٢٠٠٣. والمجستير في الإعلام من الجامعة الأمريكية بالولايات المتحدة عام ١٩٩٨. والليسانس في أصول الدين من جامعة الكويت عام ١٩٩٤م.

عضو في عدد من المؤسسات المهنية والحقوقية المحلية والعالمية، له ثلاثة أبحاث علمية أحدها منشور واثان تحت النشر.

(٢) الاهتمامات البحثية: الرأي العام الإسلامي، الإعلام الحديث والمجتمع العربي، الدراما والقيم الدينية/ الأخلاقية. مُدرِّسًا في كلية الإعلام في جامعة الشرق الأوسط وقائم بأعمال رئيسي قسمي الإعلام الرقمي، والإذاعة والتلفزيون، وفي الوقت نفسه قائم بأعمال عميد كلية الإعلام منذ عام ٢٠١٩. حاصل على شهادة الدكتوراه في علوم الإعلام والاتصال الجامعة اللبنانية - التخصص الدقيق: الإعلام الرقمي عام ٢٠١٧م. والمجستير في الصحافة والإعلام جامعة الشرق الأوسط الأردن عام ٢٠١٢م. والليسانس في الدعوة وأصول الدين جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية الأردن عام ١٩٩٥م.

الاهتمامات البحثية: الإعلام الرقمي، دراسات المرأة، دراسات الجمهور الرقمي، الخطاب الإسلامي، اللغة والإعلام

- مطالبة الحكومات و المنظمات الأهلية الإسلامية للحكومة الفرنسية بالكف عن الإساءة لمقام النبوة و رفض اعتبار الإساءة للمعتقدات الدينية جزءاً من حرية التعبير
- مطالبة الحكومة الفرنسية بلجم خطاب الكراهية ضد المسلمين .
- التأكيد على أهمية احترام الحكومة الفرنسية لعقيدة المسلمين ، و عدم التضييق على الحرية الدينية للجالية المسلمة في فرنسا
- عمل حملات توعوية في الدول الغربية للتعريف بأخلاق النبي ﷺ و مكانته عند المسلمين و سماحة الإسلام .
- الكَلِمَات المفتاحية: الرأي العام العربي، الحُكومة الفرنسية، الرسوم الكرتونية المسيئة للرسول مُحَمَّد ﷺ .