

FIRST MUSLIM ACADEMIC CONFERENCE 2025

EXPERIENCES AND
CHALLENGES OF
MUSLIMS IN
AOTEAROA NEW
ZEALAND

3 MAY 2025
ICON ROOM
TE PAPA MUSEUM





SUMMARY

The inaugural Muslim Academic Conference (MAP1), hosted by the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), Aotearoa NZ Islamic Think Tank (ANZITT), in collaboration with Massey University's Centre for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), and the Muslim Diversity Study (MDS) was held on 3 May 2025 at Te Papa Museum, Wellington. The conference brought together scholars, practitioners, and postgraduate students to explore the experiences and challenges of Muslims in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region.

With over 40 presentations across six thematic streams, the conference successfully fostered interdisciplinary dialogue, highlighted cutting-edge research, and strengthened networks for future collaboration. Key outcomes included:

- Knowledge Sharing: Diverse perspectives on education, health, media, youth, belongingness, and Islamophobia.
- Community Impact: Actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders.
- Networking: Establishment of a sustainable academic and advocacy network under the Aotearoa New Zealand Islamic Think Tank (ANZITT).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Thematic Depth and Diversity

The conference featured six streams, each addressing critical issues affecting Muslim communities:

a. Education

- Explored Islamic pedagogy, chaplaincy, and inclusive education.
- Highlighted the need for culturally responsive teaching frameworks (e.g., Prophetic Pedagogy by Dr. Abdelhamid Safa).

b. Islamophobia & Solidarity

- Analyzed media bias and strategies to combat Islamophobia (e.g., Dr. Khairiah Rahman's AI-driven media analysis).
- Showcased Māori-Muslim solidarity and global advocacy (e.g., Hemopereki Simon's work).

c. Youth

- Addressed challenges like digital parenting, refugee youth support (e.g., Project Salaam), and halal food policies in schools.

d. Belongingness

- Examined identity, integration, and post-Christchurch recovery (e.g., Dr. Sara Salman's research on long-term community resilience, and Anjum Rehman's insightful research work on belongingness).
- Dr Usmans's work on protective role of religious community-making in supporting psychological wellbeing amidst Islamophobia

e. Health & Wellbeing

- Focused on mental health, disability support, and post-traumatic growth (e.g., Fareeha Ali's study on March 15 survivors).

f. Media, Narratives & Research

- Critiqued media representation and proposed solutions (e.g., Muslim Media Watch Aotearoa initiative by Dr. Adam Brown).

2. Keynote Address

Dr. Ruqayya Sulaiman-Hill's keynote, "Strengthening Communities Through Research", emphasized the role of trauma-informed, community-led research in fostering resilience post-Christchurch attacks. Her work underscored the importance of bridging academic research with grassroots advocacy.

3. Participant Engagement

- Diverse Audience: 150+ attendees, including academics, policymakers, and community leaders.
- Interactive Sessions: Workshops and Q&A panels encouraged robust discussions on sensitive topics (e.g., balancing national security with civil liberties).
- Cultural Integration: Māori and Islamic perspectives were interwoven, reflecting Aotearoa's bicultural commitment.

4. Research Impact

- Policy Relevance: Studies like Halal Food Policies in Schools (Dr. Rahmat Mustapha-Koiki) and Culturally Responsive Disability Support (Osman Hassan-Osman) provided actionable recommendations for government agencies.
- Innovative Methodologies: Use of AI (Dr. Khairiah Rahman) and geospatial science (Dr. Salman Ashraf) demonstrated interdisciplinary innovation.

5. Community and Media Recognition

- Media Coverage: Featured in The Spinoff (<https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/11-06-2025/the-struggles-of-navigating-infertility-in-new-zealand-as-a-muslim-couple>).

NEXT STEPS

- MAP2: Scheduled for May 2026 at the University of Otago, with a focus on expanding Pacific and indigenous Muslim perspectives.
- Publications: Conference proceedings will be compiled into an open-access journal issue.
- ANZITT Network: Continued collaboration through working groups on education, health, and media advocacy.
- Early career network

The First Muslim Academic Conference in Aotearoa New Zealand marked a historic milestone in centering Muslim voices in academic and public discourse. By bridging research, policy, and community action, the conference laid the groundwork for sustained advocacy and scholarship. Its success underscores the vital role of culturally grounded research in addressing systemic inequities and fostering social cohesion in Aotearoa's diverse society. [Click here for the Book of Abstract.](#)

CONFERENCE IN PHOTOS







ANZITT

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

FIRST MUSLIM ACADEMIC CONFERENCE:
EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF MUSLIMS IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

3 MAY 2025
ICON ROOM, TE PAPA MUSEUM
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND





Thank you to all of the presenters, volunteers, and attendees ,
and photo takers for making this event happen.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

1st Muslims in Asia Pacific (MAP) Conference was the inaugural event held under the Aotearoa New Zealand Islamic Think Tank (ANZITT).

Our aim is to better understand the scope of research being done in Asia Pacific and Aotearoa NZ in topics related to Muslims and Islam, and to develop our community of researchers, practitioners and advocates, building a sustainable network for research, theorising, and advocacy centred on the experiences of Muslims in the region.

MAP1 was jointly hosted by the Center for Culture-centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) Massey University in collaboration with Muslim Diversity Study (MDS) and University of Otago, funded by Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ).

The conference aimed to build an opportunity for scholars focusing on topics related to Islam and Muslims living in the context of Asia Pacific to connect, share and discuss the challenges that we have ahead.

The conference was attended by practitioners, academics, and postgraduate students working on topics directly in, or related to the streams of the conference:

- EDUCATION
- ISLAMOPHOBIA & SOLIDARITY
- YOUTH
- BELONGINGNESS
- HEALTH & WELLBEING
- MEDIA, NARRATIVES & RESEARCH

EDUCATION

The value of the chaplain in enhancing the spiritual wellbeing of Muslims in the NZ education system -
Shahela Qureshi

Cultural and religious perceptions of Muslim teachers working with students on the Autism Spectrum -
Kathleen McIntyre

"I don't want them to know that I am Muslim." Enacted identities of Muslim youth in New Zealand -
Naashia Mohamed

Breaking Free from Digital Distraction: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Psychological Insights to Address Entertainment Addiction -
Khalid Alef

Navigating Challenges: Empowering Māori, Pasifika, and Muslim Learners through Prophetic Pedagogy in Aotearoa's Educational Landscape -
Abdelhamid Safa

YOUTH

Halal Food Policies and their Impact on Ethnic Minority Communities: A Case Study of New Zealand's School Lunch Programme -
Rahmat Adepte Mustapha-Koiki

Project Salaam: A community-based initiative for former refugee Muslim youth -
Jennifer Khan-Janif, Shemana Cassim, Naima Ali and Shireen Drew

Parenting challenges of Muslims in New Zealand -
Sayed Shafee Mohamed Yoosuf

Digital parenting and challenges of Muslims -
Hana Bouafif

Navigating Belonging: Coping Strategies of Muslim Youth Against Discrimination in New Zealand -
Hussain Raissi

HEALTH & WELLBEING

South Asian Muslim Individual's Lived Experiences of Type 2 Diabetes Healthcare - "I just want someone to actually break it down for me" -
Sohail Kashkari and Andrea LaMarre

Unlocking insights: How Muslims seek IVF guidance through WhatsApp and YouTube—and what this means for Southeast Asian migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand -
Nelly Martin-Anatias

Examining Post-Traumatic Growth in the Muslim Individuals Following the March 15 Mosque Attacks -
Fareeha Ali

Muslim Women from Refugee Background and their Experiences with Mental Health Services in New Zealand: Barriers and Enablers -
Mareena Ilyas

Bridging the Gap: Culturally Responsive Disability Support for African Muslim Communities in Aotearoa New Zealand -
Osman Hassan-Osman and Mustafa Farouk

ISLAMOPHOBIA & SOLIDARITY

Māori Muslim solidarity -
Hemopereki Simon

A vision to end Islamophobia in the Media -
Khairiah Rahman

Palestinian Solidarity: South Africa's Unique Position on the International Stage -
Hanlie Booysen

The protective role of religious community-making in supporting psychological wellbeing amidst Islamophobia -
Usman Afzali

Demographic and Personality Factors Associated with Islamophobia in New Zealand -
Jamila S Badis

BELONGINGNESS

Muslim Experiences of Belonging in Aotearoa, New Zealand -
Anjum Rahman

Reversion to Islam: Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Post-Christchurch Aotearoa -
Ayca Arkilic and Noeleen Van de Lisdonk

Dual Relationships: Boundary Issues for Interpreters in a Faith-Based Community -
S. M. Akramul Kabir

Beyond Food: Exploring the Fluidity of Halal and Haram in the Narratives of Muslim Women in Aotearoa, New Zealand -
Hina Cheema

Understanding community long-term recovery efforts and responses in the aftermath of March 15 terrorist attack -
Sara Salman

Decades of Difference: Exploring the Experiences, Identity, and Integration of Muslim Immigrants in New Zealand -
Somia Tasneem and Meng-Jie Wang

MEDIA, NARRATIVES & RESEARCH

Understanding data collection dynamics: A qualitative exploration of research assistants' experiences in the Muslim diversity study in Aotearoa New Zealand -
Farah Shawkat

Who reports on the reporters? A new body monitoring media misrepresentation of Muslims in New Zealand and elsewhere -
Adam Brown

A Muslim from Malacca, Enrique aka "Pang Lima Awang" and later nicknamed as "Dato Laut Dalam" (lord of the deep sea) was the first man to circumnavigate the globe? -
Wan Hashim

Measuring accurate prayer times for the Wellington region: A reflection of astronomical science in the service of Islam -
Salman Ashraf

The resurgence of anti-Muslim public discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand -
Zahra Emamzadeh and Donald Matheson

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Strengthening Communities Through Research: Helping Each Other, Helping Ourselves



Dr Ruqayya Sulaiman-Hill is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago, Christchurch. Holding a PhD in International Health from Curtin University, W.A., she is a co-Principal Investigator on the HRC and CMRF-funded March 15 Project: Impacts and Recovery, which examines the psychosocial effects of the Christchurch terrorist attacks on the local Muslim community. In the aftermath of the attacks, she was actively involved in the community's response and worked closely with health authorities and government agencies in advisory and liaison capacities. She has subsequently led several other studies related to March 15, further investigating its long-term impacts.

Her research focuses on the psychological impact of trauma, particularly among refugee and migrant populations, and she has also contributed to studies examining the effects of COVID-19 in several Muslim-majority countries. Currently, she is exploring the potential uses of emerging AI technologies in qualitative research.

Outside of academia, Ruqayya has been actively involved in the Christchurch Muslim community for many years, taking on various volunteer roles to support, connect with, and uplift others.

Relevant Published Papers

Bell, C., Sulaiman-Hill, R., Tanveer, S., Porter, R., Dean, S., Schluter, P. J., Beaglehole, B., & Boden, J. (2024). Factors associated with mental health outcomes in a Muslim community following the Christchurch terrorist attack. *BJPsych Open*, 10(6), 1-9.

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Dean, S., Eggleston, K., Ali, F., Thaufeeg, Z., Wells, H., Zarifeh, J., Sulaiman-Hill, R., Bell, C., & Crowe, M. (2024). 'I can feel sad about it and I can worry, but inside I know everything happens for a reason': personal experiences in the aftermath of the March 15 Christchurch mosque attacks. *BJPsych Open*, 10(6), e176, Article e176.

<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2024.791>

Lee, S. K., Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2013). Providing health information for culturally and linguistically diverse women: priorities and preferences of new migrants and refugees. *Health Promot J Austr*, 24(2), 98-103.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/HE12919>

Lee, S. K., Sulaiman-Hill, C. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2014). Overcoming language barriers in community-based research with refugee and migrant populations: options for using bilingual workers. *BMC Int Health Hum Rights*, 14, 11.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-14-11>

Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2010). Selecting instruments for assessing psychological wellbeing in Afghan and Kurdish refugee groups. *BMC Res Notes*, 3, 237.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1756-0500-3-237>

Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2011a). Changing Images of Refugees: A Comparative Analysis of Australian and New Zealand Print Media 1998-2008. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9(4), 345.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2011.616794>

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<https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-11-2>

Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2012a). Afghan and Kurdish refugees, 8-20 years after resettlement, still experience psychological distress and challenges to well being. *Aust N Z J Public Health*, 36(2), 126-134.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2011.00778.x>

Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2012b). 'Thinking Too Much': Psychological distress, sources of stress and coping strategies of resettled Afghan and Kurdish refugees. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 6(2).

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.10381607.0006.205>

Sulaiman-Hill, C. M. R., & Thompson, S. C. (2013). Learning to fit in: an exploratory study of general perceived self efficacy in selected refugee groups. *J Immigr Minor Health*, 15(1), 125-131.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-011-9547-5>

Sulaiman-Hill, R. (2007). *Kiwis on the Straight Path: Muslim Conversion in New Zealand. Aotearoa Ethnic Network Journal*.

Sulaiman-Hill, R., Porter, R., Tanveer, S., Boden, J. M., Beaglehole, B., Schluter, P., Dean, S., & Bell, C. (2021). Psychosocial impacts on the Christchurch Muslim community following the March 15 terrorist attacks: A mixed-methods study protocol. *BMJ Open*, 0:e055413.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-055413>

Sulaiman-Hill, R., Schluter, P. J., Tanveer, S., Boden, J. M., Porter, R., Beaglehole, B., Dean, S., Thaufeeg, Z., & Bell, C. (2024). The psychosocial impacts of the 15 March terrorist attack on the Christchurch Muslim community: A descriptive, cross-sectional assessment. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 58(11), 977-989.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00048674241276802>

STREAMS 1 & 2

EDUCATION

- **The value of the chaplain in enhancing the spiritual wellbeing of Muslims in the NZ education system** - *Shahela Qureshi*
- **Cultural and religious perceptions of Muslim teachers working with students on the Autism Spectrum** - *Kathleen McIntyre*
- **"I don't want them to know that I am Muslim." Enacted identities of Muslim youth in New Zealand** - *Naashia Mohamed*
- **Breaking Free from Digital Distraction: Integrating Islamic Teachings and Psychological Insights to Address Entertainment Addiction** - *Khalid Alef*
- **Navigating Challenges: Empowering Māori, Pasifika, and Muslim Learners through Prophetic Pedagogy in Aotearoa's Educational Landscape** - *Abdelhamid Safa*

ISLAMOPHOBIA & SOLIDARITY

- **Māori Muslim solidarity** - *Hemopereki Simon*
- **A vision to end Islamophobia in the Media** - *Khairiah Rahman*
- **Palestinian Solidarity: South Africa's Unique Position on the International Stage** - *Hanlie Booysen*
- **The protective role of religious community-making in supporting psychological wellbeing amidst Islamophobia** - *Usman Afzali*
- **Demographic and Personality Factors Associated with Islamophobia in New Zealand** - *Jamila S Badis*

THE VALUE OF THE CHAPLAIN IN ENHANCING THE SPIRITUAL WELLBEING OF MUSLIMS IN THE NZ EDUCATION SYSTEM

Abstract

The importance of spiritual well-being for Muslims is known both theoretically and empirically, however the role of Muslim chaplains in providing such support within academic environments has not been explored. I aim to unpack the challenges faced by Muslims in a secular education system where religion and faith are often neglected, which can impact their overall well-being adversely. A holistic approach to well-being, aligned with Islamic teachings, is essential for nurturing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of Muslim students. The role of Muslim chaplains in addressing spiritual crises, broken connections, and providing guidance on ethical and spiritual matters is pivotal for wellbeing, yet overlooked both in academia and literature. I will discuss my conceptual idea and ways to conduct the research and will seek suggestions on how to disseminate the research to make impact at the university and policy level."

About the Presenter:



Over the past 20 years and across three continents, Shahela Qureshi has worked in Pastoral Care with many diverse cultures & faith groups.

As a student of the traditional Islamic sciences, she has obtained certification in Islamic psychology and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). As an exec member of the Aotearoa New Zealand Tertiary Chaplaincy Association (ANZTCA) and a committee member of the Religious Diversity Centre, Shahela is a passionate advocate for positive social change and greater understanding between faith traditions.

Her faith and her passion to help others have led her to her current role as the Muslim Chaplain at the University of Auckland. As a source of spiritual support, cultural understanding, and a safe space for many, Shahela has been a guiding light during some of the most challenging moments in students' lives. Her work goes beyond pastoral care—she has led critical projects that have created space for healing, solidarity, and meaningful engagement.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PERCEPTIONS OF MUSLIM TEACHERS WORKING WITH STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Abstract:

This qualitative study began with the premise that the personhood of the teacher is a major variable in positive or negative responses towards the characteristics of autism manifested in the classroom. The inquiry explored the perceptions of five veteran Muslim teachers regarding their cultural and religious beliefs, beliefs that were potentially influencing their responses to students with autism. The study involved semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interviewees were asked questions related to their personal and cultural beliefs and professional experience related to their connections with students on the Autism Spectrum. The results indicated that for this cohort of teachers in mainstream and special education, religious and cultural influences were clearly perceived in both their behavioural management responses and their view of students on the Autism Spectrum.

About the Presenter:



Kathleen McIntyre completed her Master's in Specialist Teaching at Massey University, Auckland, in 2023, focusing her study on the education of students with Autism in mainstream classrooms in New Zealand. Her research explored the impacts of cultural responsiveness and values-based teaching for neurodiverse students, particularly emphasizing Māori and Muslim values and beliefs.

Currently, Kathleen teaches in the Bilingual Māori Unit, Nga Kahukura, at Prospect School in Auckland, where she continues to advocate for inclusive and culturally responsive education.

In 2005, Kathleen was awarded the New Zealand Royal Society Science Teacher Fellowship. This Fellowship allowed her to make five trips to Thailand at the request of the Thailand Research Fund Organisation, where she had her first encounter with a Muslim community at Thamwitya School (a school of 7,000 Muslim students) in the Yala Province, Thailand.

Her presentation centres on interviews with Muslim teachers in NZ who have taught students on the Autism Spectrum and on values-based teaching approaches in the classroom.

“I DON’T WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT I AM MUSLIM.”
ENACTED IDENTITIES OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

In New Zealand’s increasingly diverse contemporary society, a rising number of children and young people struggle to achieve a sense of belonging. A strong sense of identity and belonging are crucial for lifelong wellbeing. While adolescence is a significant period of identity development, migration can affect this development process. Emerging research in language and migration raises questions about the extent to which one’s sense of affiliation to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups is affected by the process of relocation and adaptation. As language can be a barrier to successful adaptation, it is important to understand its role in creating or diffusing a sense of group identity.

In a recent study I explored the language lives, identities and belonging of over 200 immigrant youth in New Zealand secondary schools, focusing in particular on how these young people’s experiences both in and outside school helped to shape their ethnolinguistic identities. I define identity as the way in which people conceive themselves and are characterized by others. Ethnolinguistic identity refers to an ethnic identity (the way in which people position their membership in one or more ethnic groups) that is defined by language. Data was gathered using surveys and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that young people feel compelled to adapt to certain normative expectations connected to the notion of being a Kiwi, often distancing themselves from their home language and cultural practices, and sometimes changing their values and beliefs in the process of assimilation.

In this talk, I would like to focus on the findings from the 65 participants in this study who identified as Muslims. Their experiences reveal that Muslim youth often face discrimination, hostility and exclusion both in and outside school, impacting their identities, their self-esteem, and their educational achievement. I will present the factors that were crucial for developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to their Islamic values and community, and how some young people wish to distance themselves from their Muslim identity. I will conclude by discussing implications for families, educational institutions, and faith communities.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Naashia Mohamed is a Senior Lecturer in TESOL at the University of Auckland. Her research and teaching sit at the intersection of language, identity, equity, and education, with a focus on the experiences of immigrant multilingual communities in English-dominant contexts. She is particularly interested in how language and culture shape individuals’ sense of self, belonging, and participation in society, and how these factors influence integration and educational outcomes. Naashia’s work is grounded in qualitative methodologies, including narrative and arts-based approaches that centre the lived experiences and voices of racially and linguistically marginalised individuals. She highlights the importance of home languages and cultural knowledge as critical resources for academic achievement, second language development, identity formation, and social wellbeing. She teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes, supporting future and current educators to develop inclusive, asset-based practices that affirm the linguistic and cultural strengths of their learners. Her scholarship advocates for equity-oriented, identity-affirming approaches that challenge deficit discourses in both policy and practice.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES:
EMPOWERING MĀORI, PASIFIKA, AND MUSLIM LEARNERS THROUGH
PROPHETIC PEDAGOGY IN AOTEAROA'S EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Abstract

Many Māori, Pasifika and Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand face systemic barriers shaped by Islamophobia and structural racism. These challenges are compounded by the ongoing responsibility to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi alongside growing cultural and religious diversity. This paper explores Prophetic Pedagogy, an educational framework grounded in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as a pathway to inclusive and equitable learning. Drawing on Critical Race Theory, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Postcolonial Theory, and Critical Muslim Studies, the paper examines how racialised policies, curricular exclusions, and epistemic injustice affect the participation of Māori, Pasifika, and Muslim communities in education. It also explores how Māori and Pasifika principles—such as manaakitanga (care), whanaungatanga (relational belonging), ako (reciprocal learning), and talanoa (relational dialogue)—align with Prophetic values like rahma (mercy) to offer a pluralistic, anti-racist approach. Although diversity is emphasised in policy, Māori, Pasifika and especially Muslim perspectives remain largely excluded from curriculum and decision-making. Through a synthesis of Prophetic educational models, such as the Charter of Medina and early Islamic practices of social inclusion, this paper outlines a justice-oriented framework for transforming education in Aotearoa. In the wake of the Christchurch attacks, the need to address systemic exclusion is urgent. This paper calls for active collaboration with Māori, Pasifika and Muslim communities and offers practical recommendations for embedding Prophetic Pedagogy in teacher education, curriculum reform, and institutional policy to support equity and belonging.

About the Presenter:



Dr Abdelhamid Safa is a TESOL and Linguistics Lecturer in New Zealand with over 25 years of experience teaching in schools and universities across diverse cultural and educational contexts. His research focuses on sociocultural pedagogies, biliteracy development, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and equity in education, advocating for Culturally Responsive Teaching to promote inclusivity.

MĀORI MUSLIM SOLIDARITY

Abstract

In New Zealand's increasingly diverse contemporary society, a rising number of children and young people struggle to achieve a sense of belonging. A strong sense of identity and belonging are crucial for lifelong wellbeing. While adolescence is a significant period of identity development, migration can affect this development process. Emerging research in language and migration raises questions about the extent to which one's sense of affiliation to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups is affected by the process of relocation and adaptation. As language can be a barrier to successful adaptation, it is important to understand its role in creating or diffusing a sense of group identity.

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About the Presenter:



Hemopereki Simon (Tūwharetoa, Te Arawa, Tainui, Hauraki, Mataatua) is an award-winning Kaupapa Māori researcher based at Te Pua Wānanga ki Te Ao, Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies at The University of Waikato. He is currently a Research Fellow on the Working to End Racial Oppression (WERO) research programme where he does research in the whānaungatanga and institutional racism themes. He also has an extensive policy background and recently completed his PhD at Charles Sturt University in Australia entitled, "Toitūte Mana: A Meditation on Mana Motuhake, The White Possessive, Settler Colonialism, Te Tiriti and The Collective Future of Aotearoa New Zealand."

A VISION TO END ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

Abstract

Introduction

Studies on Islamophobia in the media show a high proportion of negative framing of Islam and Muslims, with consistent and biased labelling that centres around violence, terrorism, and threats to peace and national security. (Benzehaf, 2017; Rahman, 2022; Saleem et al, 2021). Media narratives that perpetuate a negative profile of Muslims sow seeds of hatred and intolerance within society. Continued biased reporting in western media have triggered dangerous outcomes such as assaults on Muslim women in New Zealand and Australia, and the growth of supremacist groups (Chamas, 2025; Hussein et.al, 2024). Such groups become emboldened, and Muslims are further marginalised when the leadership of a country is slow to condemn such acts and intentionally delay support (Roe, 2025). There needs to be a concerted effort to end Islamophobia for social cohesion to have a chance at success.

Key research focus

Given the extensive collection of Islamophobia literature on western media's reportage of Islam and Muslims, the best way forward to combat such narratives would be to understand the issues, collate and act on the unique recommendations.

Methodology/Conceptual Approach and Findings

Using an Artificial Intelligence application, and with a focus on the topic of "Media portrayals of Islamophobia", this question was asked: What are the main findings of research on Islamophobia in the media? Data mined from 16 research papers showed overwhelming evidence of biased reporting that demonised Muslims. Issues include stereotypes perpetuated in tabloid-style news and philosophical foundations dating back to Western medieval and modernism thinking. A new search asked for "Recommendations to address Islamophobia in the media" from research papers. This yielded 118 concepts from 76 papers. This data underwent another process of removing duplications to produce 81 unique concepts. Some examples are "encourage critical commentary", "promote positive role models" and "support documentaries and films". The 81 concepts were then thematically grouped into actions for the media, political leadership and communities. Discussions draw on the nature of persuasion and dialogue in Islam and the central roles of ethical, peace and developmental journalism (Andersen, 2015; Rahman, 2016).

Implications

This work provides a comprehensive strategy to combat Islamophobia in the media. The recommendations are evidence-based research by international academics about the ongoing issue of Islamophobic news. Despite the contextual and regional differences, the findings are similar, and the recommendations are reliable and potentially transformative.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Khairiah A Rahman is Senior Lecturer at the School of Communication Studies, AUT and has served on several advisory boards (Pacific Media Centre, Meta's Aotearoa News Innovation Advisory Group and the Centre for Research Excellence on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism). She is the Secretary for Media Education for the Asian Congress for Media And Communication and is a founding member of the Asia Pacific Media Network. Khairiah has served on several editorial boards (The Pacific Journalism Review, Pacific Media Journal, The Age of Terroredia) and written articles and book chapters on intercultural communication, media representations, culture and identity, dialogue and persuasion, and crisis communication. Her research on media representations of Islam and Muslims in New Zealand was cited in Radio New Zealand, Spinoff and The Pacific Media Watch. In 2021, Khairiah spoke about media complicity in a conference on countering terrorism and violent extremism organised by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In 2024, she was interviewed by ABC on social cohesion, challenges and solutions following the Bondi junction attack. Khairiah is currently working on several equity and social cohesion projects, while actively serving her community as government liaison.

PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY:
SOUTH AFRICA'S UNIQUE POSITION ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Abstract

This paper examines the complex factors contributing to South Africa's significant support for Palestine, despite being a non-Muslim majority country. The study explores the multifaceted reasons behind South Africa's prominent role in advocating for Palestinian rights on the international stage, including its recent application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) alleging Israeli breaches of the Genocide convention.

The research identifies four key interconnected factors:

1. Leadership legacy, particularly Nelson Mandela's influential stance on the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
2. Post-apartheid foreign policy, shaped by South Africa's transition from a regime that closely cooperated with Israel to one that champions Palestinian self-determination.
3. Shared historical experiences of dispossession, discrimination, and state-sponsored violence, fostering a sense of solidarity between South Africans and Palestinians.
4. South Africa's alignment with the Global South, exemplified by its participation in the BRICS+ grouping and its broader geopolitical positioning.

By analysing these factors, the paper argues that South Africa's support for Palestine stems from a unique combination of historical, political, and ideological elements. This comprehensive approach provides insights into why South Africa has taken such a bold stance on the international stage, risking diplomatic tensions with Israel and the United States.

The study contributes to the understanding of international solidarity movements and the role of post-colonial states in shaping global discourse on human rights and self-determination. It also explores the implications of South Africa's position for future diplomatic relations and its potential influence on the approaches of other nations, including those in the Asia Pacific, to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

About the Presenter:



Dr Hanlie Booysen is a multifaceted professional with a rich background in diplomacy, academia, and public service. Her career spans two continents and encompasses diverse roles in government and academia.

In her former career as a South African diplomat, Dr Booysen served in Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. Her academic pursuits led her to obtain a PhD in the Study of Religion from Victoria University of Wellington/Te Herenga Waka, with a focus on Political Islam. She continues to contribute to academic discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Arab uprisings, and the relationship between Islam and politics. Dr Booysen is also a founding member of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Aotearoa ([MEISA](#)) network.

CHALLENGE AND EXPERIENCE FOR DEAF/DISABILITY ACCESS/EQUAL
STANDARDS, EQUALITY, INCLUSION

Abstract

Tania presents her own case, reflections and research to highlight the challenges and experiences of the deaf community esp. the intersectional challenges of being a deaf, indigenous woman. After some research and self-reflection, I have come to understand, as a Māori Deaf wahine, I have had very limited access to Te Reo even while growing up in a strong Māori environment due to not being able to pick up what was being said or talk around me. I love Art with Māori culture and drawing lifetime. I learned in WHS in 1978.

When I was 13 I attended Wellington High school and joined the Māori Polynesian club for two years, supported by my Māori teacher Kara. Unfortunately sign language was banned from age 6 to 12 years old. Sign language was banned in old boarding school in Feilding. I was not able to use my native language, or Māori concepts in Sign Language. Then at age 23, I was involved in a Māori hearing group called the Ngāti Poneke youth club. I learned from my kuia and aunty who taught me about Māori weaving bags after the Māori youth club and Māori design jersey. I found the Māori deaf community and was finally able to learn Te Reo sign language, connecting both my cultures and languages at last (1996 to 2025). There is a lack of religious sign language and its use. I started learn from 2007 in Dubai and Middle east from Jordan and Egypt and learn to Arabic culture and languages and make create to develop Islam sign language and involved Islam sign language in 2014 to 2025. Involved with Muslim women community and Eid celebration. Providing interpreters to access the Muslim world and teaching Islam sign language and start help and support to the deaf Muslims. There is still a big gap in this space.

About the Presenter:



Tania Ali is a Māori Turi wahine with iwi affiliations to Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Tūwharetoa, based in Wellington. She has been a dedicated New Zealand Sign Language tutor for over 20 years, and is deeply engaged with both the Aotearoa Muslim and New Zealand Deaf communities.

Tania serves as the Executive Board Member (Māori representative) at Deaf Aotearoa, and holds numerous leadership and advocacy roles, including as Chair of FERNZ and the Kāpiti Action Group, and as a member of the Kāpiti Coast Disability Council / Disability Reference Group, the Kāpiti Destination Management Network, and Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) as a Deaf advocate.

She also works closely with Wellington City Council's Accessibility Project Team, and is one of eight representatives in Parliament's Accessibility Reference Group. With extensive experience supporting people with disabilities, Tania's advocacy continues to enhance accessibility, equity, and inclusion across Aotearoa.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND PERSONALITY FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

Attitudes towards religious minorities are a crucial aspect of social cohesion in diverse societies. In Aotearoa New Zealand, understanding attitudes towards Muslims has become particularly important following the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks. Previous research has examined predictors of attitudes towards Muslims, but the relationship between Islamophobia and general coldness towards Muslims needs further exploration.

Key research questions:

What are the demographic and personality factors that are associated with Islamophobia in New Zealand?
How are Islamophobia and coldness towards Muslims correlated?

Method:

Using data from wave 14 of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study ($n = 33,722$), we conducted a multiple regression simultaneously predicting two variables: islamophobia and coldness toward Muslims. We also ran a correlation between coldness towards Muslims and Islamophobia.

Findings and implications:

We show that Islamophobia and coldness towards Muslims in New Zealand are highly correlated constructs with nearly identical demographic and personality predictors. We found that being male, older, of lower socioeconomic status, religious (except for Muslims), unemployed, and living in rural areas predicted both higher Islamophobia and coldness towards Muslims. Personality traits such as lower agreeableness, openness, and honesty-humility, and higher conscientiousness and neuroticism were also predictive of both constructs. The strong correlation ($r = .82, p < .001$) between Islamophobia and coldness suggests that coldness can serve as a reliable proxy measure for Islamophobic attitudes. These findings extend our understanding of anti-Muslim sentiment in New Zealand and demonstrate the utility of warmth measures in assessing Islamophobia. This research provides valuable insights for developing targeted interventions to reduce anti-Muslim prejudice and promote social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies.

About the Presenter:



Jamila Badis is an early career researcher whose previous work focuses on the Muslim community in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a strong commitment to community-centered research. She advocates for research about Muslims to be conducted by Muslims, ensuring culturally responsive and ethically grounded scholarship. Jamila has been a key collaborator on several academic papers and played an integral role in the Muslim Diversity Study, a significant project examining the lived experiences of Muslims in Aotearoa. Beyond her work with Muslims, Jamila's research interests span political and economic psychology, where she explores how socio-political and economic factors shape individual and collective behaviour. As an emerging scholar, Jamila is committed to producing research that informs policy, challenges stereotypes, and promotes social justice.

STREAMS 3 & 4

YOUTH

- **Halal Food Policies and their Impact on Ethnic Minority Communities: A Case Study of New Zealand's School Lunch Programme**
-Rahmat Adepte Mustapha-Koiki
- **Project Salaam: A community-based initiative for former refugee Muslim youth -**
Jennifer Khan-Janif, Shemana Cassim, Naima Ali and Shireen Drew
- **Parenting challenges of Muslims in New Zealand -** *Sayed Shafee Mohamed Yoosuf*
- **Digital parenting and challenges of Muslims -** *Hana Bouafif*

BELONGINGNESS

- **Muslim Experiences of Belonging in Aotearoa, New Zealand -** *Anjum Rahman*
- **Reversion to Islam: Citizenship, Identity and Belonging in Post-Christchurch Aotearoa -** *Ayca Arkilic and Noeleen Van de Lisdonk*
- **Dual Relationships: Boundary Issues for Interpreters in a Faith-Based Community**
- S. M. Akramul Kabir
- **Beyond Food: Exploring the Fluidity of Halal and Haram in the Narratives of Muslim Women in Aotearoa, New Zealand -** *Hina Cheema*
- **Understanding community long-term recovery efforts and responses in the aftermath of March 15 terrorist attack -** *Sara Salman*
- **Decades of Difference: Exploring the Experiences, Identity, and Integration of Muslim Immigrants in New Zealand -** *Somia Tasneem and Meng-Jie Wang*

HALAL FOOD POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMME

Abstract

The underlying principle for a Muslim diet is that food must be halal (permissible) and thoyyiban (wholesome: healthy, safe, nutritious, and of high quality) (Kamisah, 2018, quoting Ahmad and Mohd Shariff, 2016). The concepts of halal and thoyyiban are mentioned in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 168: O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, halal and good (thoyyiban), and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy.

However, as part of its revamped food security policy programme for schools, the New Zealand government is facing significant backlash for providing foods that are not halal. The government provider, the School Lunch Collective, admitted and apologised that the meals delivered to schools could be classified as 'halal-friendly' but are not halal certified (RNZ, 14 February 2025).

The Ministry of Education stated that, as part of its requirements, halal meals from the School Lunch Collective and other meal providers must be prepared with halal-certified beef and chicken, and must not contain pork or pork-derived ingredients. "Additionally, the practice used to prepare the food follows strict cleaning and wash-down procedures between each meal production" (RNZ, February 2025).

To fully understand the intersections and significance of halal-compliant foods for Muslims and government policy initiatives, it is necessary to examine relevant food policy schemes for ethnic minorities at the international level. This will provide crucial considerations and protocols required for such programmes.

Reflecting on semi-structured interviews with Muslims from the Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA) ethnic groups in New Zealand, the responses will offer valuable insights into designing a policy programme that envisions a world where all tamariki (children) in New Zealand "grow up surrounded by loving whānau (family) households, within supportive communities, where there are resources, opportunities, and systems to enable them to live self-determined lives and futures" (Rush et al., 2023), regardless of ethnicity or cultural background.

The policy implications and applications of the proposed research could drive the development of more inclusive, culturally-sensitive food policies in New Zealand, particularly in the context of public services like schools. By addressing the halal food needs of ethnic minorities and ensuring fairness, quality, and access, the research could promote social inclusion, equity, and respect for diversity within New Zealand's food security policies.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Rahmat Adepute Mustapha-Koiki is an accomplished media, communication, and public policy scholar. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree with Honours in Mass Communication and a Ph.D. in Media and Communication, with a research focus on Conflict Communication and Journalism Risk. She is pursuing a Master's in Public Policy, further expanding her interdisciplinary expertise.

She is an alumnus of the United States Department of State's prestigious International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on Conflict Resolution and a Fellow of the Institute of Peace, Washington D.C., USA. Strong competencies in analytical and critical thinking, problem-solving, quality assurance, and advanced research and analysis distinguish her academic and professional work.

PROJECT SALAAM: A COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVE FOR FORMER REFUGEE MUSLIM YOUTH

Abstract

The Arabic term 'salaam' in its most basic sense means peace. The conception of Project Salaam in 2018 was in response to the significant pressure from experiences of race-based surveillance and discrimination that Muslim young people from a refugee background were facing in Mt Roskill, Auckland. The Project aimed to support this group of young people who were also grappling with how to negotiate issues of trauma and associated grief and anger.

The Project works with former refugee Muslim youth to grow leadership and skills in conflict resolution through a series of experiential workshops. Internationally, conflict resolution programmes have been implemented with communities as a form of peace building and violence prevention, alongside trauma recovery and healing for refugee groups. Such programmes have also been shown to promote self-esteem, self-efficacy, empathy and trust, and to reduce anger and stress. Accordingly, Project Salaam workshops focused on, and aimed to increase self-esteem and confidence, and focused on enhancing participants' learning and academic achievement and strengthening their cultural and faith identities.

A recent evaluation of Project Salaam highlighted positive feedback from participants, alongside the various strengths of the Project including how the workshops provided youth with a safe space and community in the school environment, and 'tools' to process and come to terms with their feelings, particularly following the March 2019 Christchurch attacks. The evaluation also emphasized the importance and value of the Islamic values that underpinned the Project for these Muslim youth. Initiatives like Project Salaam have broad implications in terms of providing tools for youth success, enablers to support and mentor students, a tailored approach, diversity and inclusion in positive and proactive ways, bringing faith-based approaches into Aotearoa New Zealand schools, creating opportunities for conversations about diversity, providing a collaborative strategy for youth development, and promoting social cohesion and preventing/countering violent extremism.

Recent developments have also seen the Project being facilitated in Melbourne, Australia. Overall, this presentation highlights the importance of an initiative like Project Salaam to support former refugee Muslim youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, and beyond.

About the Presenter:



Jennifer Khan-Janif is a Community Researcher and an experienced Community Development Practitioner, specialising in work with ethnic communities. Since 1990, she has held various roles in the public sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Jennifer has played a pivotal role in fostering collaboration between academic scholars, community leaders, and policymakers on multiple community development projects that support Muslim communities across Aotearoa. She is the co-founder and co-designer of Project Salaam, one such initiative that exemplifies her commitment to inclusive community engagement. She holds a Master's degree in Human Rights with Honours from Auckland University of Technology, along with a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Auckland. Jennifer was appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Group (2021) on the Government's response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques. New Year's Honours List (2020), she was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to refugee and migrant communities. She has also served as a Justice of the Peace (1998). Jennifer has published both scholarly and creative works, including academic publications, poetry, and short stories.

PARENTING CHALLENGES OF MUSLIMS IN NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

Raising children with strong cultural values and a deep sense of faith and identity presents significant challenges for many immigrant families, particularly those in resettled countries such as New Zealand. This issue is especially pronounced within Muslim immigrant communities, where family dynamics and social values may differ significantly from those in their countries of origin. As these families navigate their new environments, they often face the added difficulty of maintaining cultural continuity while integrating into a society with different norms and expectations.

Urbanization, industrialization, and modernization have deeply transformed traditional family structures and gender roles. These societal shifts have contributed to rising divorce rates and an increase in single-parent households. When parental relationships break down, the impact extends far beyond the couple, often leaving profound emotional, social, and psychological effects on the children involved. These changes in family dynamics can have long-lasting consequences on children's development, especially in terms of their sense of security, self-esteem, and ability to adapt to societal pressures.

In the face of these challenges, parents are tasked with meeting their children's emotional, academic, and spiritual needs, all while fostering an environment that encourages personal growth and success. This delicate balance requires empathy, unwavering support, and a commitment to teaching resilience, effort, and perseverance. The question then arises: how can parents fulfill these needs while helping their children navigate the complexities of a new cultural context without losing sight of their heritage?

This paper seeks to explore these challenges in greater detail through a qualitative case study approach, offering valuable insights and strategies that parents can use to address and overcome the difficulties they face. By examining real-life experiences, the study aims to provide practical recommendations that can help immigrant parents better support their children's growth in both the cultural and spiritual realms.

In conclusion, raising Muslim children in Western societies presents unique challenges, but with the right guidance, support, and approach, parents can successfully help their children grow into well-rounded, confident, and faithful individuals. By maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity while fostering adaptability and resilience, these parents can equip their children with the tools they need to thrive in their new environment without compromising their values.

About the Presenter:



Shaikh S. Shafee M. Yoosuf is a Registered Mental Health Professional actively working in the mental health sector, as well as a dedicated Voluntary Imam serving various mosques and Islamic centres across Auckland. He holds three bachelor's degrees, earned both locally and internationally, along with a master's degree from the prestigious International Islamic University Malaysia and completed several mental health trainings in New Zealand.

Shaikh Shafee is deeply committed to supporting both youth and adults, and he works tirelessly to strengthen and build resilient families. He collaborates with a range of organizations to support individuals and families in leading better, more fulfilling lives in New Zealand. In addition to his clinical and community work, he has conducted numerous workshops for staff across various District Health Boards, aiming to enhance their ability to deliver culturally appropriate care to Muslim clients. He is also actively involved in interfaith initiatives, working with diverse religious groups to promote peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and social harmony throughout New Zealand.

DIGITAL PARENTING AND CHALLENGES OF MUSLIMS

Abstract

In today's digital age, everything is instantly accessible, ordering food, completing assessments, watching films, and socialising, all from a smartphone. Nearly one-third of New Zealand teens spend four or more hours online daily, while 38% report two to four hours (Huber-Koizumi & Brown, 2024). While technology strengthens connectivity, it also raises concerns about children's health, development, and parental control (Livingstone, 2014).

Family is the foundation of society, and parenting shapes children's character (Alvanda et al., 2024). As online harms increase, Muslim families face further challenges in preserving faith, heritage, and values while staying informed about digital trends. Balancing the benefits of technology with online risks is essential yet complex. Parents require evidence-based strategies to guide media use effectively (Children and Screens, 2025).

This paper explores an Islamic parenting framework, helping Muslim parents adopt digital parenting practices aligned with Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This qualitative research follows a case study/workshops approach. Muslim parents applying Islamic parenting will participate in workshops facilitated by Pirate Academy (Facebook) - an initiative promoting cyber awareness and digital parenting strategies.

Data collection is planned to be carried out through interviews with attendees (parents and children). Research instruments, structured as written questions in an Excel sheet, align with our objectives to identify parental mediation types, explore their limitations, and collect insights directly from families.

The results of this research aim to contribute to the development of adaptive parental mediation strategies for the digital era. Specifically, it advocates for wise parental mediation, inspired by the 10 pieces of advice given by Luqman the Wise, guiding children to navigate the digital world safely, ethically, and positively.

At Pirate Academy, our mission is to help guardians navigate parental mediation strategies for children's internet use. We highlight strategy limitations and introduce "Wise parental mediation" - a method enabling children to explore digital spaces safely while staying connected to Islamic faith and culture.

Keywords: #digitalparenting, #family #cyberawareness, #Muslims #PirateAcademy

About the Presenter:



Hana Bouafif is a passionate advocate for cybersecurity education and digital empowerment. Born in Tunisia, she pursued a Bachelor's degree in IT Engineering before earning a Master's in Cybersecurity and Telecommunication, laying the foundation for her mission to create a safer digital world.

Currently, Hana serves as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Waikato. She is also the founder of Pirate Academy, an initiative dedicated to equipping families both parents and children with the skills and awareness needed to navigate the digital realm wisely.

She is now embarking on a new journey, exploring how she can better understand and support Muslim parents in their parenting mission within today's digital landscape.

In 2019, Hana migrated to Aotearoa with her family, bringing her vision for digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness to new horizons. With a deep commitment to education and innovation, she continues to inspire and empower others in their digital journeys.

MUSLIM EXPERIENCES OF BELONGING IN AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

In New Zealand's increasingly diverse contemporary society, a rising number of children and young people struggle to achieve a sense of belonging. A strong sense of identity and belonging are crucial for lifelong wellbeing. While adolescence is a significant period of identity development, migration can affect this development process. Emerging research in language and migration raises questions about the extent to which one's sense of affiliation to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups is affected by the process of relocation and adaptation. As language can be a barrier to successful adaptation, it is important to understand its role in creating or diffusing a sense of group identity.

In a recent study I explored the language lives, identities and belonging of over 200 immigrant youth in New Zealand secondary schools, focusing in particular on how these young people's experiences both in and outside school helped to shape their ethnolinguistic identities. I define identity as the way in which people conceive themselves and are characterized by others. Ethnolinguistic identity refers to an ethnic identity (the way in which people position their membership in one or more ethnic groups) that is defined by language. Data was gathered using surveys and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that young people feel compelled to adapt to certain normative expectations connected to the notion of being a Kiwi, often distancing themselves from their home language and cultural practices, and sometimes changing their values and beliefs in the process of assimilation.

In this talk, I would like to focus on the findings from the 65 participants in this study who identified as Muslims. Their experiences reveal that Muslim youth often face discrimination, hostility and exclusion both in and outside school, impacting their identities, their self-esteem, and their educational achievement. I will present the factors that were crucial for developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to their Islamic values and community, and how some young people wish to distance themselves from their Muslim identity. I will conclude by discussing implications for families, educational institutions, and faith communities.

About the Presenter:



Anjum Rahman is the founder and facilitator Inclusive Aotearoa Collective Tāhono. She is a chartered accountant with 30 years of experience and has worked with various commercial, farming and not-for-profit entities.

She is a member of international committees dealing with violent extremist content online. She was the inaugural co-chair of the Christchurch Call Advisory Network and Vice-Chair of the Independent Advisory Committee of the Global Internet Forum for Countering Terrorism. She is also Vice-President of the Internet New Zealand Council.

She also commits to various volunteer roles in the community. She was a founding member of the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand, an organisation formed in 1990 to unite Muslim women and represent their concerns. She has also been a founding member and trustee of Shama, Ethnic Women's Trust, which supports ethnic minority women through social work service, life-skills classes and community development. She has worked in the area of sexual violence prevention both as a volunteer and as part of Government working groups. Anjum is a trustee of Trust Waikato, a major funder in the Waikato Region.

REVERSION TO ISLAM:
CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN POST-CHRISTCHURCH AOTEAROA

Abstract

Islam is set to become the largest religion in the world by 2075 against a global socio-political climate that stigmatises Muslims. Mirroring global trends, Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in Aotearoa. This is striking given that New Zealanders are becoming less interested in religion generally and have more negative attitudes towards Muslims than towards other religious groups. This paper examines the causes, processes, and consequences of Islamic conversion (reversion) in Aotearoa, with a focus on Māori and Pākehā conversion to Islam. Existing publications on the topic are limited in scope and do not draw from original fieldwork or interviews. The findings of the paper draw from 25 interviews conducted with Māori and Pākehā Muslim converts in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, and Wellington between 2021 and 2024. This research has so far identified that Aotearoa's colonial past has largely determined Māori individuals' conversion decisions. We also argue that the pandemic and the country's post-Christchurch security context have created new challenges for converts, and there is a perceived hierarchy within the convert community, with Pākehā converts enjoying a superior position in the eyes of policymakers and born Muslims over Māori.

About the Presenters:



Dr. Ayca Arkilic is a Senior Lecturer in Political Science and International Relations at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. She is the author of *Diaspora Diplomacy: The Politics of Turkish Emigration to Europe* (Manchester University Press, 2022) and the co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Turkey's Diasporas* (2024). She serves as associate editor of *Diaspora Affairs and Mediterranean Politics*.

Noeleen van de Lisdonk

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS:
BOUNDARY ISSUES FOR INTERPRETERS IN A FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

Abstract

Professionals who live and work in the same area or community often play dual roles. However, the contextual needs and practicalities of boundary issues have not been fully explored to establish a positive distinction between clients and those in professional roles. This study aims to investigate the issues of professional boundaries for Muslim professional interpreters working within the Muslim community in Christchurch. The context emerging from the March 15 Mosque attacks in 2019 placed professional workers in a situation, particularly within tight-knit communities, where unique challenges intertwine their professional responsibilities with personal relationships. The subset of Muslim professional interpreters is part of a study funded by CMRF titled "Which Hijab Am I Wearing Today? Challenges of Dual Relationships for Christchurch Muslims Working with the Victims of the March 15 Attacks." This situation raises the following question:

How are the challenges of personal and professional boundary issues addressed within a faith-based community?

Method: The data collection instrument for this study consisted of semi-structured interviews. Data were collected through one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted in English with five Muslim professional interpreters who were among twenty interviewees for the main study mentioned above. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data and identify relevant themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Findings: This study explores the experiences and challenges faced by Muslim professional interpreters balancing dual roles in a faith-based community. The study identifies issues related to feelings of isolation and mistrust from community members, experiences concerning a shift in how peers and community members perceive Muslim professional interpreters and how they protect their own privacy. Finally, the interpreters discuss shared lessons and strategies employed by participants to navigate these challenges.

About the Presenter:



Dr. S. M. Akramul Kabir is a Research Fellow in the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago, Christchurch, and is a member of the UOC Education Committee. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and MA degrees in Language, Literature, and Applied Linguistics from Aligarh Muslim University in India and Macquarie University in Australia. His professional experience includes Translation and Interpreting for the Canterbury Health District Board and the Christchurch District Court, where he contributed to proceedings following the Christchurch terror attacks. Dr. Kabir is also involved in the March 15 Project: Impacts and Recovery at the University of Otago, which is funded by the HRC. His current research focuses on the use of AI for methodological innovations, dual relationship challenges faced by Christchurch Muslims in professional roles after March 15 attacks, and the psychological impact on emergency responders' well-being. He is currently a Principal Investigator on an HRC-funded Activation Grant aimed at studying the long-term well-being of emergency responders to the March 15 mosque attacks.

BEYOND FOOD: EXPLORING THE FLUIDITY OF HALAL AND HARAM IN THE NARRATIVES OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

The concepts of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) are widely recognized among Muslims, primarily in relation to food consumption, particularly meat. However, these concepts extend beyond dietary laws and are deeply embedded in cultural, social, and contextual interpretations. This study explores the evolving meanings and applications of halal and haram in the lived experiences of Muslim women in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Through qualitative research based on open-ended interviews, this study examines how these women navigate, interpret, and apply these concepts in various aspects of their lives.

Findings reveal that there is no singular or universal understanding of halal and haram; rather, their meanings shift depending on personal, cultural, and situational contexts. The study highlights how Muslim women engage with these concepts not only in relation to food but also in linguistic and symbolic ways. For instance, the word "pig" carries haram-related connotations even when used outside the context of meat consumption. The research demonstrates that halal and haram function as fluid, adaptable constructs influenced by individual beliefs, community norms, and broader socio-cultural settings.

These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic concepts, moving beyond rigid dichotomies to acknowledge their interpretative flexibility. The study has implications for discussions on cultural identity, religious practice, and the everyday negotiations of faith in diverse Muslim communities. It also provides insights into the intersection of religion, language, and gender, emphasizing the role of women in shaping and redefining religious meanings in diaspora contexts.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Hina Tabassum Cheema is a social anthropologist whose research centres on cultural and ethnic diversity, social inclusion, social justice, gender, and Islam. Her PhD research at Massey University, titled "Becoming a 'Good' Muslim Woman: Comparing Habitus and Everyday Lived Religiosity," is an ethnographic study of the everyday lives of Muslim women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Alongside her academic work, Hina enjoys creative writing; her poetry has been published in the annual anthology of Tauranga Writers. She also actively engages with wider communities through newspaper articles and public outreach. Hina is committed to community engagement and public scholarship, with a focus on fostering intercultural understanding and dialogue.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY LONG-TERM RECOVERY EFFORTS AND RESPONSES IN THE AFTERMATH OF MARCH 15 TERRORIST ATTACK

Abstract

What role do communities play in the long-term recovery efforts after large-scale disasters? As the globe is grappling with mass disasters, including terrorist attacks, scholars point to the need for robust government intervention to mitigate the impact of such catastrophes. In Aotearoa, Muslim communities and other racialised communities, affected by disasters increasingly wither storms alone. After the initial show of aroha and support, the government appears to retreat from its duty of care. This research project seeks to examine community responses to the March 15, 2019, terrorist attacks.

The purpose of the study is to identify patterns of community responses to structural and social harm, and to understand how community and grassroots responses to disaster create possibilities of thriving even in the absence of caring government responses.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Sara Salman (tangata Tiriti Taiwi), is a criminologist at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka. She studies structural and political violence. Sara examines the relationship between state and citizen in late modern western democratic regimes. Her recent book, *The Shaming State*, examines the erosion of social rights and the political use of shame against people in need, and argues that shame exacerbates the decline of social solidarity. Sara has written on state neglect in time of disasters and the impact of structural inequalities on social cohesion in Aotearoa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sara also researches terrorism and extremist violence.

Through the lenses of cultural criminology and critical social theory, she explores these forms of violence in connection to resurgent nationalism and gendered violence. Sara has written on the recruitment of men and women into terrorist groups as well as the connection between gender and extremist violence. Sara engages in public debates on structural and political violence. She has been interviewed in national and international media including Stuff and the New York Times. Her work has appeared in *E-Tangata*, the *NZ Herald* and the *Spin Off*.

DECADES OF DIFFERENCE: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES, IDENTITY, AND INTEGRATION OF MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

This study examines the experiences, identity formation, and integration challenges of Muslim immigrants in New Zealand, comparing those who arrived before and after 1990. Given the growing Muslim population, the study explores how these two groups have integrated into New Zealand's evolving multicultural context, offering insights into their unique experiences. The first phase employs a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data from a diverse group of participants. The questionnaire addresses themes such as religious identity, community building, access to social services, discrimination, and political integration. It uses yes/no and multiple-choice responses to identify patterns in both groups' experiences, providing a comparative overview of the challenges faced by pre-1990 and post-1990 Muslim immigrants.

The goal of this phase is to establish a foundational understanding of trends within New Zealand's Muslim settler population. Findings from this phase will inform the development of more specific questions for the qualitative phase, which will explore the identity formation and personal narratives of Muslim settlers in New Zealand. This research will be valuable to readers interested in New Zealand's history, sociocultural dynamics, and immigrant identity.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Somia Tasneem is a dynamic scholar and experienced academic who served as an Assistant Professor of History at Government College University, Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. With a Ph.D. in History (University of Canterbury, 2021), supported by a GCUF Ph.D. scholarship, she is a Gold Medallist in recognition of her outstanding performance and Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK. Her research focuses on parliamentary democracy in Pakistan and youth engagement in democratic processes, exploring how youth can contribute to strengthening democratic systems. At GCUF, she taught a diverse range of subjects, including Pakistan and British political and constitutional histories, and the role of international organizations in promoting democratic values and global cooperation. She presents at national and international conferences and supervises graduate and postgraduate students. Dr. Tasneem has collaborated with the Muslim Diversity Study (Part of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study). Her academic journey reflects a strong commitment to research excellence and cross-cultural pedagogy.

Co-Researcher



Dr. Meng-Jie Wang is a Postdoctoral Fellow at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. With a PhD in Psychology (University of Canterbury, 2024), her research bridges computational social science and social psychology, with a strong emphasis on methodological innovation. Drawing on advanced computational approaches – such as large language models and machine learning – much of her work to date investigates how diverse groups communicate, behave, and interact, particularly within social media networks. A core strand of Dr. Wang's research is the exploration of national unity in culturally diverse societies, aiming to uncover strategies to reduce intergroup conflict and foster social cohesion, with findings that inform both academic and policy audiences. Her work has been published in journals such as Springer Nature, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., and Palgrave Macmillan, and presented in international conference proceedings such as IEEE Social Computing and Networking and Information Technology, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence.

STREAMS 5 & 6

HEALTH & WELLBEING

- **South Asian Muslim Individual's Lived Experiences of Type 2 Diabetes Healthcare - "I just want someone to actually break it down for me" - Sohail Kashkari and Andrea LaMarre**
- **Unlocking insights: How Muslims seek IVF guidance through WhatsApp and YouTube—and what this means for Southeast Asian migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand - Nelly Martin-Anatias**
- **Examining Post-Traumatic Growth in the Muslim Individuals Following the March 15 Mosque Attacks - Fareeha Ali**
- **Muslim Women from Refugee Background and their Experiences with Mental Health Services in New Zealand: Barriers and Enablers - Mareena Ilyas**
- **Bridging the Gap: Culturally Responsive Disability Support for African Muslim Communities in Aotearoa New Zealand - Osman Hassan-Osman and Mustafa Farouk**

MEDIA, NARRATIVES & RESEARCH

- **Understanding data collection dynamics: A qualitative exploration of research assistants' experiences in the Muslim diversity study in Aotearoa New Zealand - Farah Shawkat**
- **Who reports on the reporters? A new body monitoring media misrepresentation of Muslims in New Zealand and elsewhere - Adam Brown**
- **A Muslim from Malacca, Enrique aka "Pang Lima Awang" and later nicknamed as "Dato Laut Dalam" (lord of the deep sea) was the first man to circumnavigate the globe? - Wan Hashim**
- **Measuring accurate prayer times for the Wellington region: A reflection of astronomical science in the service of Islam - Salman Ashraf**
- **The resurgence of anti-Muslim public discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand - Zahra Emamzadeh and Donald Matheson**

SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM INDIVIDUAL'S LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TYPE 2 DIABETES HEALTHCARE - "I JUST WANT SOMEONE TO ACTUALLY BREAK IT DOWN FOR ME"

Abstract

Objective: Type 2 Diabetes is highly prevalent across Aotearoa New Zealand, and South Asian people have a disproportionately high burden of disease. This research aimed to improve understanding of South Asian Muslim people's experiences navigating New Zealand's diabetes healthcare to promote cultural responsiveness and equitable outcomes.

Method: We conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 South Asian Muslim individuals with Type 2 Diabetes. Interviews explored how participants made sense of their diabetes in relational and cultural contexts, and the healthcare barriers and facilitators they experienced. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to develop themes from the interview transcripts.

Results: Three key themes were developed: the feeling, managing, and reflecting on diabetes worry in relational contexts; the cultural and relational challenges of enacting self-control and discipline; and how diabetes is a family experience, for better or for worse.

Conclusion: These themes illustrated the multifaceted relational dynamics of navigating diabetes healthcare. Several avenues to consider for developing culturally sensitive diabetes care were suggested. This included: practitioners exploring dynamics of worry, shame and self-blame, building upon family supports, supporting reducing family-facilitated health barriers, addressing power dynamics which facilitate institutional distrust, and funding culturally appropriate, accessible community health interventions.

About the Presenter:



Sohail Kashkari is a South Asian-European health psychologist specializing in providing culturally sensitive care to diverse populations with chronic disease.

He has experience supporting the wellbeing of people with chronic pain, cancer, concussion, diabetes, and in physical rehabilitation settings. Sohail has worked in public and private hospitals, primary care, private clinics, non-profits, NGOs, start ups, and in community based organisations. Sohail currently works in North Shore hospital pain services, and in private practice primarily supporting ACC psychology referrals. When appropriate, he works to sensitively and collaboratively integrate cultural conceptualizations into psychological interventions. He has particularly valued working cross-culturally within Māori and Pasifika healthcare organizations, and with the Muslim community. The publication he is presenting stemmed from his Masters of Psychology research at Massey University with his supervisor Dr Andrea LaMarre.

UNLOCKING INSIGHTS:
HOW MUSLIMS SEEK IVF GUIDANCE THROUGH WHATSAPP AND YOUTUBE—AND WHAT THIS
MEANS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN MIGRANTS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

This presentation thoughtfully explores the experiences of Southeast Asian (SEA) Muslims seeking guidance on in vitro fertilisation (IVF) due to involuntary fertility concerns while living in Aotearoa, New Zealand, their adopted country. While these individuals have the opportunity to access free IVF treatment in their host country, many face uncertainties regarding the religious permissibility of such procedures.

Between 2020 and 2021, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 SEA Muslim participants residing in major cities across Aotearoa. Our approach involved careful transcription of the interviews, detailed manual coding of the data, and open thematic discussions during our regular meetings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our findings sensitively reveal the various challenges encountered by these religious participants, particularly in relation to the gender-based perspectives expressed by the local imams (religious leaders) and ethnic communities in their new country. In their pursuit of clarity regarding their religious beliefs, many participants sought guidance through innovative channels, including consultations with their home country imams via YouTube and communication with their homeland relatives and friends through WhatsApp. This presentation aims to highlight the adaptability and resilience of the SEA

Muslim participants as they strive to maintain their Islamic identity while navigating the assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) available through the New Zealand government. Additionally, we recognise the existing gap between these SEA Muslim participants and the presumably available Muslim scholars regarding IVF-related advice. Our research also illustrates the diverse range of religious interpretations surrounding IVF within New Zealand's Muslim communities, reflecting a rich tapestry of beliefs and perspectives.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Nelly Martin-Anatias is a sociocultural and anthropological linguist examining intersections of language, identity, and power in modern contexts. Her research encompasses gender studies, language ideology, code-switching in media and literature, textual hermeneutics, and autoethnography. Currently, she investigates systemic language barriers hindering minority communities' access to fertility care in Aotearoa/New Zealand, alongside analysing communication gaps between healthcare professionals and Southeast Asian migrants.

Her scholarly work features in prominent journals such as *World Englishes*, *South East Asia Research*, *Humanity and Society*, *Language@Internet*, and *Text & Talk*. She has authored in the key edited volumes, including *English in Southeast Asian Popular Culture* (Oxford University Press), which analyses linguistic hybridity in media, and *How Ardern's Government Effectively Used Social Media and Consistent Messaging During the Global Pandemic* (Routledge), a critical exploration of crisis communication. Beyond academia, Dr. Martin-Anatias contributes to public debates through opinion pieces in *The Conversation*, *Inside Indonesia*, *The Jakarta Post*, and *Stuff NZ*, addressing sociolinguistic equity, migration, and cultural representation.

Her interdisciplinary approach highlights a commitment to amplifying marginalised voices and advancing cross-cultural understanding through rigorous, socially engaged scholarship.

EXAMINING POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH IN THE MUSLIM INDIVIDUALS FOLLOWING THE MARCH 15 MOSQUE ATTACKS

Abstract

Background and Context

Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) refers to the positive psychological change experienced due to the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. It encompasses personal development, enhanced relationships, and a deeper appreciation for life. While much research has focused on PTG in various contexts, the specific implications of terrorism on PTG remain underexplored. The tragic events of March 15, 2019, when two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, were targeted in a terrorist attack, have generated growing interest in understanding the psychological impacts on the affected communities, particularly within the Muslim population. Initial research indicated high levels of PTG among survivors, suggesting that many individuals found ways to derive meaning and resilience from their traumatic experiences¹. However, a critical need remains to explore the specific factors that contribute to these experiences of growth, particularly in relation to cultural and religious contexts.

Research Question

This study seeks to address the question: How do religion and other factors influence experiences of post-traumatic growth among Muslim individuals affected by the Christchurch Mosque attacks?

Methodology:

The current study builds on both qualitative and quantitative research conducted by the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago, Christchurch, following the March 15 attacks. Utilizing a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews guided by thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework will be employed. Participants will be recruited through strategic outreach and community engagement, as well as snowball sampling, focusing on personal narratives related to trauma and recovery. Thematic analysis will be utilized to identify recurring themes that emerge around resilience, faith, and cultural influences. A systematic review has already been conducted to consolidate findings from various studies investigating PTG in populations affected by terrorism.

Anticipated Findings:

The anticipated results aim to illuminate the unique social, cultural, and religious factors that shape trauma experiences and recovery processes within the Muslim community. It is expected that findings will reveal how faith and community solidarity play pivotal roles in fostering resilience, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of PTG in the context of traumatic events.

Implications and Application:

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for the development of tailored mental health interventions for minority communities affected by terrorism. By enhancing the understanding of post-traumatic growth and the significant role of faith and community in recovery, this research advocates for the inclusion of Islamic and cultural perspectives in therapeutic practices. Ultimately, the study aims to promote healing by integrating religious and socio-cultural values into mental health strategies, reinforcing the strengths within the Muslim community in the wake of tragedy.



About the Presenter:

Fareeha Ali is a trained anthropologist, qualitative researcher, and interpreter with extensive experience addressing social issues in diverse communities. She holds three master's degrees and is currently pursuing a PhD in Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago, focusing on resilience and religion—specifically, coping mechanisms for post-traumatic growth following the Christchurch Mosque Attacks. Since 2019, she has worked as an Assistant Research Fellow at the University of Otago. Her PhD is supported by the He Whenua Taurikura Scholarship, awarded by Victoria University of Wellington. As a Muslim woman, Fareeha is committed to culturally sensitive, inclusive research and fostering meaningful collaboration with communities.

MUSLIM WOMEN FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUND AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN NEW ZEALAND: BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Abstract

Research question: What are the barriers and facilitators of help-seeking behavior regarding mental health services among Muslim female refugees resettled in New Zealand?

Each year, hundreds of thousands of refugees flee their home countries due to war and persecution, often experiencing a range of health challenges, including heightened vulnerability to psychological issues. New Zealand, as one of the resettlement destinations, hosts refugees with a highly diverse range of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Among these groups, Muslims represent a distinct minority, united by their faith in Islam, yet coming from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traditions.

Refugee women face unique challenges, which are often compounded for Muslim female refugees due to their religious and cultural practices. They are frequently subjected to negative stereotypes, which can significantly impact their health and willingness to seek help. Additionally, societal determinants of health, along with cultural and religious factors, can influence their access to and utilization of mental health services. International research on Muslim migrant women's experiences with healthcare systems highlights both barriers and inequities. However, there is a notable lack of research specifically addressing the access to mental health services and the barriers and facilitators for Muslim refugee women settled in New Zealand. This study aims to fill that gap.

This qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of Muslim women from refugee backgrounds. The research involves up to eight participants, each with a reasonable level of English proficiency, allowing them to understand the questions and express themselves without the need for an interpreter. Each participant is expected to engage in a 60–90-minute semi-structured interview. The data is analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase process. A deeper understanding of the mental health struggles faced by Muslim women from refugee background, along with their perceived barriers to accessing and utilizing mental health services, will provide valuable insights. These findings can inform policymakers and service providers, guiding them to deliver more effective and culturally appropriate services. The knowledge generated by this study has the potential to improve mental health access and utilization for Muslim community, benefiting both current and future generations. By identifying the barriers Muslim women face when seeking mental health support, this research could also assist community organizations in securing funding opportunities to address these obstacles. While only a few studies have been conducted in Aotearoa-New Zealand regarding the barriers and inequities faced by refugee Muslim women in healthcare, this study aims to address this gap in knowledge. It is hoped that the research will raise awareness of the specific needs of the target population and contribute to promoting equity, ultimately improving the health and well-being of refugee communities.

About the Presenter:



Mareena Ilyas is a dedicated educator, researcher, and registered counsellor with a Master's degree in TESOL and a Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling. Her work spans in the fields of education, mental health, and cross-cultural communication.

As an accomplished author, Mareena has published five books and received multiple awards for her contributions to literature, including a prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award in France in 2023. She is also an experienced scriptwriter and radio presenter, hosting a program with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Deeply committed to community engagement, Mareena plays an active role in refugee resettlement initiatives in Auckland and collaborates with interfaith groups to foster inclusion and understanding. Her work reflects a lifelong passion for empowering diverse communities through education, storytelling, and support.

BRIDGING THE GAP: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE DISABILITY SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

This study explores the lack of culturally and religiously appropriate community support for African and Muslim people with disabilities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the lived experiences of parents and individuals within these communities, the research highlights significant gaps in disability services, particularly in accessing respite care, long-term support, and tailored resources.

Many African Muslim parents expressed a strong commitment to family-based care, guided by cultural and religious values. However, their reliance on family support was further complicated by limited awareness of available disability services and a deep-seated distrust of mainstream systems that failed to align with their beliefs. Participants reported difficulties navigating government agencies such as Work and Income, housing support, and healthcare due to the absence of a dedicated disability organisation for African communities. In contrast, other ethnic groups—including Pākehā, Māori, Pacific, and Asian communities—benefited from established disability networks that effectively advocated for their needs.

This study underscores the urgent need for systemic change, including the development of culturally responsive disability services, the establishment of community-based support networks, and policy reforms that acknowledge the intersection of disability, culture, and religion. In response to these challenges, a parent-led support group, Autism Noor, was established in Waikato, drawing inspiration from E Tū Whānau, an initiative of the NZ Ministry of Social Development. Autism Noor provides a safe and inclusive space for Muslim families with children on the autism spectrum, fostering mutual support, shared experiences, and guidance underpinned by Islamic values and Tikanga.

As one African parent in the group shared: “We understand the spiritual benefits and the unique challenges and joys of raising a child on the autism spectrum. Mutual understanding and collaboration can significantly impact our journey as parents.”

This research highlights the pressing need for culturally tailored disability services that empower and uplift African Muslim families, ensuring they receive the support they deserve.

About the Presenters:



Dr Mustafa Farouk is the father of an autistic young man named Muhammadu Farouk. Mustafa is a community worker and a Senior Scientist at AgResearch Ltd. In 2015, he was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for Service to the Muslim Community. He served as the president of FIANZ 2018-2020; as a Wing Patron for the New Zealand Royal Police College; and currently on the NZ Police and NZ Corrections Muslim Reference Groups. Mustafa and friends founded 'Autism Noor' a Parent-to-parent support group for Muslim families with whanau members on the spectrum in Waikato.

Osman Hassan-Osman

I am an African Muslim with lived experience of disability, advocating for culturally appropriate services for Muslims with disabilities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through activism in Sudan and community work in New Zealand, I highlight gaps in current disability services and promote inclusive, culturally sensitive healthcare design informed by lived experience.

UNDERSTANDING DATA COLLECTION DYNAMICS: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS' EXPERIENCES IN THE MUSLIM DIVERSITY STUDY IN AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

The Muslim Diversity Study, also known as “A National Longitudinal Study of Muslim Diversity and Flourishing”, aims to provide rich insights into New Zealand’s Muslim community’s attitudes, values, well-being, and resilience. It is carried out in the context of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). NZAVS has a long, successful history of collecting high-impact research related to social attitudes, dating back to 2009. NZAVS is a (well) known and internationally established research programme, and the Muslim Diversity Study (MDS) has been integrated within NZAVS as a booster study to understand and share better data about New Zealand Muslims. Funded by Templeton Religion Trust and drawing on the NZAVS study, the MDS team uses the NZAVS questionnaire to collect data from 600 Muslims throughout New Zealand. This study investigates the factors that facilitate or hinder data collection from the Muslim community in Aotearoa New Zealand, focusing on the experiences of research assistants. The key research question is: What enablers and challenges do research assistants face while collecting data from the Muslim community in Aotearoa New Zealand? The paper employs a qualitative research design, guided by the grounded theory approach. Data is obtained through semi-structured interviews of research assistants involved in the Muslim Diversity Study. Interviews were held as audio-recorded conversations via Microsoft Teams with the participants’ consent. These are then transcribed using Microsoft Teams AI tool and analysed using NVivo and Copilot, while managing confidentiality and data security. Preliminary findings indicate multiple enablers and challengers in the data collection process. Enablers like the cultural competence and sensitivity of research assistants, community engagement strategies, and positive interests of the participants. Challenges include issues such as community mistrust, logistical problems, and research assistants’ emotional distress. The study highlights the importance of building trust within the community, providing adequate support for research assistants, and leveraging inclusion to bring better results.

This study has critical implications for future research involving Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. Therefore, this study outlines the facilitators and barriers in data collection and offers valuable recommendations to future researchers hoping to work with culturally diverse populations. These insights can guide data collection best practices, strengthen research methods, and contribute strongly to transnational research engagement. Furthermore, the study highlights the practical implications of institutional support and training for research assistants to facilitate work with underrepresented communities. The findings add to the existing literature on cross-cultural research methodology while providing actionable suggestions for those conducting data collection in diverse cultural contexts.



About the Presenter:

Dr Farah Shawkat is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Otago. She has been engaged in the Muslim Diversity Study (MDS) since December 2023. As a research assistant for the MDS Dunedin team, she supports the principal investigator, Dr Usman Afzali. Having received comprehensive training in conducting longitudinal research, she also plays an active role in co-designing future scientific publications. Her recent contributions have focused on conducting an extensive qualitative investigation into the experiences of research assistants, aimed at analysing methodological adaptations in research practices.

WHO REPORTS ON THE REPORTERS? A NEW BODY MONITORING MEDIA MISREPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS IN NEW ZEALAND AND ELSEWHERE

Abstract

It is a commonplace observation that the reporting of Muslims in the Western media (including New Zealand and Australia) is biased and negative. For example, in 2017, OnePath Australia conducted a year-long survey of articles with Islamophobic content in Australian newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch. The average for six controversial writers was 31%, nearly one third – and as high as 64% for one writer. Also, as OnePath comment, “Even though they are stated to be ‘opinion’ pieces, they are often written as fact.” The average of negative articles, where Islam and Muslims were mentioned alongside words like violence, extremism, terrorism and radical was over eight articles per day for the whole year.

15 March 2019 was a watershed day in New Zealand history. The narrative changed from Muslims being the perpetrators of violence, to being the victims. At a meeting with FIANZ after the shootings, Wellington-based reporters admitted that they knew little about Islam and Muslims. This is despite the fact that there are 75,000 Muslims in New Zealand, and the number of Muslims worldwide is projected to be similar to the number of Christians by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Once the shootings were no longer in the headlines, negative articles reappeared. Biased and unfair reporting on Muslim matters continues, and retractions are not always forthcoming. It is much easier to reprint articles from Western outlets such as UK and US newspapers (The Guardian, The Washington Post, etc), television news stations (the BBC, CNN, etc), than to research the background to events and write original articles from a position of intelligent, researched knowledge.

A new body, Muslim Media Watch Aotearoa, has been established to redress this imbalance by:

- Highlighting examples of media reporting, in New Zealand and overseas, that contain information about Islam that is not accurate, or that is not neutrally reported
- Correcting errors of omission, that is conveying reports and stories about Muslims and Islam that did not appear in the media
- Reporting Islamic stories from overseas that illustrate how Muslims are treated and reported in other countries, including developed Western nations
- Modelling ethical journalism and responsible reporting following Islamic practices and tradition
- Explaining Islamic concepts and terms that are regularly mistranslated and misunderstood
- Serving in an advisory capacity and as a resource to other media outlets reporting on Islam-related stories and Muslims in New Zealand.

MMWA is an ideal outlet for publishing brief write-ups of research on Islamophobia in New Zealand, especially in the media. Muslim Media Watch Aotearoa is not connected with Muslim Media Watch in Australia (a function of the Alliance of Australian Muslims), whose purpose seems more to document instances of online and offline Islamophobia. Pew Research Center (2015). The future of world religions: Population growth projections, 2010-2050. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

About the Presenter:

Dr. Adam Brown spent four decades teaching tertiary level, in his native UK, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and New Zealand. He was Associate Professor at The National Institute of Education (Singapore) and Head of Research/Business Studies at The Auckland Institute of Studies. Adam holds a PhD in language from the University of Edinburgh, and has written many books and articles on the topic, including Pronunciation and Phonetics, Understanding and Teaching English Spelling, and Activities and Exercises for Teaching English Pronunciation (all Routledge, 2014, 2018, 2022 respectively). His latest – and first Islamic – publication is The Religion is Easy (Tughra, 2025). Another Islamic book, Males and Females: An Islamic Perspective, has been accepted for publication by Beacon Books.

MEASURING ACCURATE PRAYER TIMES FOR THE WELLINGTON REGION:
A REFLECTION OF ASTRONOMICAL SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ISLAM

Abstract

Accurate prayer times are essential for Muslims, as establishing prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam. This study represents a fascinating intersection of Islamic tradition and modern scientific methodologies, particularly in the context of determining prayer times for Muslims in the Wellington region of New Zealand. The integration of astronomical and geospatial methods to address the unique challenges posed by the region's topography and urban spread is a significant advancement over traditional single-location approaches used in most Islamic prayer time apps. Consequently, these Islamic prayer time apps pose a noticeable difference to prayer times which must be corrected to ensure prayers are offered at the right time.

The methodology discussed in this study offers a scientifically rigorous yet religiously informed approach to determine prayer times and ensure that all members, regardless of their location within the region, can observe their prayers and adhere to their religious obligations (such as starting and breaking of fast) with greater accuracy and confidence. Moreover, it serves as a model for other areas of New Zealand with similar geographical and topographical challenges to update their prayer times. This study bridges the gap between historical Islamic scholarship and modern scientific advancements.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Salman Ashraf is a Remote Sensing Scientist at GNS Science, employing his expertise in processing aerial and satellite imagery to monitor, map, and interpret natural Earth processes and resources. His skills encompass Remote Sensing, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Geospatial Analysis, and Cartography, which he applies to the study of diverse environmental and geological phenomena. Dr. Ashraf's academic background includes a B.Sc. in Space Science with a focus on Astronomy and Astrophysics (1992) and an M.Sc. in Space Science specialising in remote sensing and digital image processing (1995), both earned at the University of the Punjab in Pakistan. Before pursuing his doctorate, he spent over a decade at WWF-Pakistan, a prominent global nature conservation NGO, where he served as a GIS Analyst and later as Manager of the GIS Lab. He furthered his academic pursuits by obtaining a Ph.D. from the University of Waikato in New Zealand in 2011.

Demonstrating a broader intellectual curiosity, Dr. Ashraf possesses a significant interest in mathematical astronomy, particularly in the calculation of lunation for the Islamic calendar. His interest in astronomy led to his invitation as a Guest Speaker by the Royal Society Te Apārangi Wellington Branch in 2023, where he delivered a well-received public lecture titled "Medieval Muslim Scholars: Advancements in Astronomy, Timekeeping, and the Unique Hijri Calendar."

THE RESURGENCE OF ANTI-MUSLIM PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

In New Zealand's increasingly diverse contemporary society, a rising number of children and young people struggle to achieve a sense of belonging. A strong sense of identity and belonging are crucial for lifelong wellbeing. While adolescence is a significant period of identity development, migration can affect this development process. Emerging research in language and migration raises questions about the extent to which one's sense of affiliation to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups is affected by the process of relocation and adaptation. As language can be a barrier to successful adaptation, it is important to understand its role in creating or diffusing a sense of group identity.

In a recent study I explored the language lives, identities and belonging of over 200 immigrant youth in New Zealand secondary schools, focusing in particular on how these young people's experiences both in and outside school helped to shape their ethnolinguistic identities. I define identity as the way in which people conceive themselves and are characterized by others. Ethnolinguistic identity refers to an ethnic identity (the way in which people position their membership in one or more ethnic groups) that is defined by language. Data was gathered using surveys and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that young people feel compelled to adapt to certain normative expectations connected to the notion of being a Kiwi, often distancing themselves from their home language and cultural practices, and sometimes changing their values and beliefs in the process of assimilation.

In this talk, I would like to focus on the findings from the 65 participants in this study who identified as Muslims. Their experiences reveal that Muslim youth often face discrimination, hostility and exclusion both in and outside school, impacting their identities, their self-esteem, and their educational achievement. I will present the factors that were crucial for developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to their Islamic values and community, and how some young people wish to distance themselves from their Muslim identity. I will conclude by discussing implications for families, educational institutions, and faith communities.

About the Presenters:



Dr. Zahra Emamzadeh holds a PhD in Media and Communication from the University of Canterbury, where her research focused on media representation and the legitimization of narratives through media. Her academic and professional interests are centered on political communication, representation, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as well as intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and enhancing the representation of ethnic communities in global media.



Donald Matheson is Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand. He is the author of two books and the editor of a number of others on journalism and communication. He is a co-editor of *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, past-president of the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association. He writes on journalism practice, public communication in social media and communication ethics, often using qualitative or corpus-assisted discourse analysis. Current projects include communication practices around biosecurity and tracking online Islamophobia.

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ORGANISING TEAM

DR. FATIMA JUNAID



Dr. Fatima Junaid is a Senior Lecturer at Massey University's School of Management & Marketing, specializing in Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources. With an MBA, MSc, and PhD, she has over two decades of experience as a consultant and educator in both public and private sectors. Her work focuses on the wellbeing, with research interests in stress, trauma, anxiety, wellbeing, PTSD and psychosocial risks in the workplace. Dr. Junaid researches with marginalized communities, including refugees, women, migrants, and fishers, aiming to develop support mechanisms and contextualizing organizational support for better wellbeing outcomes. She speaks at various forums, and her publications appear in newspapers, industry and academic journals, and books. Recently, she completed research projects for Maritime New Zealand and the Federation of Islamic Associations.

Dr. Junaid is a dedicated mentor and leads "Pakistani Women in Academia" with 650+ members. She supports women in higher education and the public sector, dedicated to nurturing future scholars and professionals. A mother of two daughters, she speaks three languages.

She is Core Faculty at CARE (Centre for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation), Lead Researcher (Wellbeing Cluster) at Aotearoa New Zealand Islamic Think Tank, National Representative of the COPSOQ, Board Member of Manawatu Multicultural Council, International Member of the American Psychological Association, and a member of the Australia New Zealand Mental Health Association, National Women Council, Massey MPOWER, Community Research Aotearoa, Middle East & Islamic Studies Aotearoa (MEISA) at the University of Otago, and The New Zealand South Asia Centre at the University of Canterbury.

DR. USMAN AFZALI

Dr Usman Afzali serves as a Lecturer in the Religious Studies Programme | Mātai Wairuataka at the University of Otago, where he teaches Psychology of Religion, Religion and Human Behaviour, and the Scientific Study of Religion courses. He is also an Adjunct Senior Fellow in School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing at the University of Canterbury.

His research explores how religious beliefs and practices shape human cognition, behaviour, and social dynamics. He employs a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and experimental (behavioural and neuroscientific) methods, with a particular focus on the psychology of religious experiences and the effects of contemplative and ritual practices on wellbeing, resilience, and human flourishing.

Dr Afzali is the Principal Investigator of the Muslim Diversity Study, where he leads a team of dozens of research assistants and collaborators investigating the role of religion in shaping social attitudes, values, and flourishing within Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work includes comparative research with other religious groups and contributes to the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS), a 20-year longitudinal panel study of adult New Zealanders.

He is an Associate of the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (CACR) at Victoria University of Wellington, a Core Faculty member of CARE (Centre for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation), Vice President of the Muslim Health Council Aotearoa (MHCA), and Chair of the Dunedin Abrahamic Interfaith Group.





PROF. MOHAN DUTTA

Mohan J. Dutta is a globally recognized communication scholar known for his pioneering work in social justice, health communication, and critical cultural theory. He is the founder of the Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), where he develops voice infrastructures that amplify marginalized communities' narratives. Dutta's research addresses structural inequalities, including Islamophobia, by co-creating communication platforms that enable resistance and advocacy. Through participatory and culture-centered methodologies, he builds partnerships with disenfranchised groups to challenge dominant discourses and foster transformative change. His work bridges academia and activism, advancing inclusive, community-driven communication for global justice.



DR. ZAHRA EMAMZADEH

In New Zealand's increasingly diverse contemporary society, a rising number of children and young people struggle to achieve a sense of belonging. A strong sense of identity and belonging are crucial for lifelong wellbeing. While adolescence is a significant period of identity development, migration can affect this development process. Emerging research in language and migration raises questions about the extent to which one's sense of affiliation to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups is affected by the process of relocation and adaptation. As language can be a barrier to successful adaptation, it is important to understand its role in creating or diffusing a sense of group identity.



RITO TRIUMBARTO

Rito Triumbarto is dedicated to fostering social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and empowerment across New Zealand's diverse Muslim communities. As the National Community Development Senior Executive at the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), he has delivered 100+ events and 30+ nationwide programs, including pioneering projects like You Got This (social enterprise training for youth) and the Nikau Project (a symbolic NZ-Indonesia friendship effort). His expertise in stakeholder engagement shines through his roles as President of the NZ Indonesia Association NZIA), Muslim Co-Chair of the Wellington Abrahamic Council, and member of the Multicultural Council of Wellington.

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MAP2 AT OTAGO UNIVERSITY ON MAY 2-3, 2026
WATCH THIS SPACE - MORE INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE SOON
SEE YOU THERE IN SHA' ALLAH

