Institution: 10007140 Birmingham City University

Unit of Assessment: 20. Social Work and Social Policy

Title of case study: Redefining Islamophobia and Influencing anti-Muslim hate crime policy in Britain

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2019

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s): Professor Imran Awan	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Criminology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2013 – Present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2019

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Professor Awan's research has directly influenced how practitioners, social media companies and policy-makers tackle Islamophobia in Britain. Awan's reputation and expertise has led to him being a frequent and essential member of numerous high-profile Government-led bodies tasked with challenging misinformation about Muslims. His research led to the first ever working definition for Islamophobia in the UK, which has resulted in tangible changes in guidance and critical public policy, as well as supporting victims and stakeholders in tackling hate crime. Awan's work around Islamophobia on social media has benefitted voluntary organisations and third-party reporting centres, who utilised his training for their practitioners, resulting in increased knowledge and reporting about online/offline Islamophobia, and providing intervention mechanisms to support victims of anti-Muslim hatred.

2. Underpinning Research (indicative maximum 500 words) There has been growing evidence that anti-Muslim hostility online has become more prevalent (R01); the organisation Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) found 548 verified incidents (from 729 reports) of anti-Muslim abuse between March 2014 to February 2015. Despite the fact that the majority of incidents took place online (402 of 548), there was little academic evidence concerning the nature and effects of online anti-Muslim hatred. Awan and Dr Irene Zempi (Nottingham Trent University) became the first two researchers to combine their expertise and knowledge on Islamophobia to conduct the foremost UK study to research anti-Muslim hate crime. They used two independent research projects in order to consider the affinity between online (Awan) and offline (Zempi) anti-Muslim hate crime and found that Muslim women are more vulnerable to intimidation, violence and harassment, both online and offline. Moreover, they found that victims often live in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world' (R02). Awan developed a unique typology of offender behaviour characteristics (R03) and, with Zempi, was able to demonstrate the collective effects associated with online/offline anti-Muslim hostility through notions of a transnational Muslim community, the ''ummah''. From a theoretical perspective, the research helped establish that anti-Muslim hate crime is not a static problem, but instead a key feature of Islamophobic hate crime. It showed that single incidents of hate crime tend to be part of a long-term pattern of victimisation, a recurring and, in some cases, constant feature of one's everyday life (R04). Further research looked into the consequences of physical and cyber anti-Muslim hate for victims by interviewing Muslims that had reported anti-Muslim hate experiences to Tell MAMA. This was the first ever study in the UK to shed light on their experiences, both in the virtual and physical world, rather than examining these experiences in isolation. The research found it was difficult for victims to isolate and separate online/offline abuse (R01), and led to the development of e-toolkits and bite-sized information guides for Tell MAMA, used to support victims of abuse.

Supported by Awan's research, Tell MAMA concluded that there is a continuity and link between anti-Muslim hostility in both the virtual and the physical world across the globe (R01, R03, R04).

This led to an autoethnographic piece of research, which reflected upon Awan's own experiences of Islamophobic victimisation as a result of being 'visibly' Muslim in public spaces in the UK. This was an extremely novel approach in criminological ethnography, given that it was the first study of its kind in the UK to use autoethnography and the role of insider/outsider status in adopting the role of the Muslim 'other' in public spaces. This enabled new insights to be drawn into the nature, extent and impact of Islamophobic hostility and showed that visible Muslims' experiences of victimisation can lead to underreporting (R05).

More recently, Awan's research has addressed a further gap in the literature on the effects and determinants of Islamophobia upon people who are perceived to be Muslims (R06). Non-Muslims who experience Islamophobia remain 'invisible' in both official statistics and empirical research. Awan's findings showed that participants differentiated between 'external' and 'personal' factors that contributed to their experiences of hate crime. They also found that people's vulnerability depended upon the geographical area in which they were located. For example, some participants felt safer in diverse cities in the UK, such as Birmingham. In contrast, the sense of vulnerability, as well as the risk of attack, was perceived to be significantly higher in less diverse areas.

Crucially, Islamophobia as a phenomena has evolved, as has the need to have a contemporary working definition. Awan and Zempi proposed that structural and cultural racism, which targets the symbols and markers of a being a Muslim, should be included in a new definition. The significance of this definition emphasised the link between institutional forms of Islamophobia and how it is triggered by the visibility of the victim's (perceived) Muslim identity (R06).

Awan's research has reached both professional and public levels, shaping and informing popular discourse around Islamophobia and its effect on an individual and societal level. For example, the Advertising Value Equivalent of media/research coverage received with his name up to May 2020 totalled £1,262,752.39. The reach of coverage (Oct 2018 – Oct 2020) was £3,914,511.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R01. Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (2015) 'I will Blow your Face off': Virtual and Physical World Anti-Muslim Hate Crime, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57 (2): 362–380.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azv122

R02. Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (2016) The Affinity between Online and Offline Anti-Muslim Crime: Dynamics and Impacts*, Aggression and Violent Behavior.* 27: 1-8.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.02.001

R03. Awan, I. (2014) Islamophobia on Twitter: A Typology of Online Hate Against Muslims on Social Media, *Policy & Internet*, 6 (2): 133-150. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/1944-2866.POI364

R04. Zempi, I. and Awan, I. (2016) *Islamophobia: Lived Experiences of Online and Offline Victimisation*, Policy Press Shorts: Bristol: ISBN: 978-1447331964. https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/islamophobia

R05. Zempi, I. and Awan, I. (2017) Doing 'dangerous' autoethnography on Islamophobic victimization**,** *Ethnography* (Online) 18 (3): 367-386.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138117697996

R06. Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (2018) 'You all look the same': Non-Muslim men who suffer Islamophobic hate crime in the post-Brexit era, *European Journal of Criminology,* 17 (5): 585-602.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818812735

4. Details of Impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Influencing policy direction and training for anti-Muslim hatred organisations
Awan's work with Tell MAMA was directly used by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Islamophobia (now the APPG on British Muslims) at a policy level to help direct specific inquiries about the global threat of online Islamophobia. Awan was invited to present evidence to the APPG on six different occasions between 2013 and 2017, and prepare briefing papers and conduct workshops and seminars for over 27 key Parliamentarians, government officials and lay members of the public about his findings (R01, R04, R05, R06) [S01]. Awan was able to ensure that his research underpinned the governmental policy process because hate crime, in his view, was not a static problem (R06).

In his first invitation to the APPG in September 2013, Awan explained the need to understand the impacts of online Islamophobia (R03). Awan was invited by the APPG in December 2014 to present one of the first ever studies about Islamophobia on social media. It was attended by the Minister for Faith and Communities, who subsequently asked Awan to join the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group (AMHWG) to use his evidence-based research to identify gaps on anti-Muslim hatred policy that the Government could address.

In 2015, Awan was invited on two further occasions to the APPG. First, in June, to present evidence about the impacts of Islamophobia (R02) and then in October to present findings from his Tell MAMA report about social media victimisation (R01). The following October, the APPG once again requested Awan to present findings about gendered Islamophobia. This study was based on his experiences of doing autoethnographic research (R05). He was invited again in October 2017, during Hate Crime Awareness Week, to present new research about the experiences of non-Muslim men who suffer Islamophobia (R06).

As a direct result of his recommendations to the APPG about revising social media guidelines (R01, R04), the Director of Public Prosecutions at the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) invited Awan to sit as an expert member of their National Hate Crime Security Panel (NHSP) to provide evidenced-based recommendations on how social media guidelines and current policy and legal guidance could be improved in relation to racial and religiously aggravated hate crime. Awan used his research and expertise to highlight to the CPS that victims of online Islamophobia felt the current guidelines did not allow them to share harmful content to the appropriate authorities. This led to the CPS adopting Awan's recommendation to change their guidelines to better enable victims to report hate crimes.

"Dr Awan made a significant contribution to the NHSP…Awan recommended that we consider the impact of online abuse and the sharing of harmful content should be part of the new revised guidelines," stated the Head of the CPS Hate Crime NHSP. *"The guidance was subsequently amended to include sharing harmful content as a distinct category."* [S02]

Awan provided evidence-based training for practitioners in helping them implement effective case management and recording systems, serving as the first point of contact in dealing with anti-Muslim hatred. This directly benefitted Tell MAMA in identifying key triggers for Islamophobic abuse online and applying the appropriate sensitive interventions. The training was pivotal in helping Tell MAMA find hard-to-reach groups, and supporting those groups using Awan's bite-sized-toolkits by explaining how communities can report online Islamophobia. These toolkits have been accessed by over 100 mosques across the UK, empowering local communities to break down the barriers of reporting Islamophobia (R01, R03). *"Awan's work has directly fed into our guidance and training for our staff…his toolkits and online PDFs have helped victims who have reported to us when they have suffered hate crimes. These resources have been useful and provide practical solutions for those victims…"* [S03].

Awan's research (R01, R04, R05) led to further training for Faith Associates, which resulted in changes in policies and strategies.

These include how mosques record anti-Muslim hatred, safety measures they can use and creating positive case studies to inform mosques how to encourage worshippers to report online hate speech. This enabled over 200 mosques and Imams across the UK to have a greater understanding of how Muslims should report Islamophobia [S04]. Working with Faith Associates, Awan provided key training at Twitter Headquarters, which was attended by over 50 Muslim leaders and Imams from across the UK. As a direct result, mosque leaders reported that they were better equipped to use digital space to identify and report Islamophobic abuse, something they previously did not have guidance and training for. The CEO of Faith Associates stated that Awan's research *"helped to directly lead to mosques having a better awareness of how they can tackle Islamophobia in the digital world…our professional standards, guidance and training methods have been influenced by his research…we have used Professor Awan's research…to help change policy strategies within mosques in Britain…his work has directly helped change how people perceive Muslims in the UK and help confront the negative perceptions of Muslims."* [S05]

Awan directly worked with the Head of Twitter UK, utilising his research to develop solutions in tackling anti-Muslim hatred through roundtables and workshops where his research, interviews and data (R01, R02, R03) were used by Twitter to help empower Muslim communities.
In a joint blog by Twitter and Awan, published on their website, they said, *"Twitter has come together with the independent members of the Cross Government Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred (AMHWG) as part of a shared commitment to counter hateful conduct online…much of the content identified by this critical research…was removed for breaking the Twitter rules…Critically, we can only develop scalable solutions by working in partnership with experts."* [S06]

Working with Parliamentarians to define Islamophobia
In 2014, Awan was appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister to sit as an independent member of the AMHWG. Awan used his research at a policy level to help the Government identify trends and gaps on Islamophobic hate crime.

The (then) Deputy Director of Integration and Faith commented that Awan, *"has played an important role in helping Government better understand the causes and drivers of anti-Muslim hatred…his work around social media has paved the way for a better awareness of what social media companies could do when confronting online hate crime."* [S07]

Currently, not all monitored hate crimes are treated the same; this can result in Muslims being reluctant to report hate crime, due to a belief that it will not be taken seriously. Awan identified the need therefore for a new legal definition of Islamophobia, which would help support victims of anti-Muslim hatred. Awan met with the (then) Government Minister for Faith and Communities, who commissioned him to deliver a new independent report, entitled *A Working Definition of Islamophobia for the UK Government*. This report led to the first ever formal process of defining Islamophobia by a British Government.

The Government used his findings to establish a new process in creating a working definition of Islamophobia, a process in which Awan played a key role. The Minister for Faith and Communities stated: *"His research into Islamophobic hate crimes has informed the evidence base for our policy development…Awan's contribution has been instrumental and…has helped to develop and improve both Government policy and Parliamentary understanding…"* [S07]

His work has directly contributed to the Government's National Hate Crime Action through his role with the AMHWG, where he was able to use his research on the offline impacts of attacks against mosques (R03) to argue that more funding was required to secure buildings from attacks. The Home Office agreed to allocate £1.6 million over three years for the protection of faith institutions. This was increased after the attack on Finsbury Park mosque. In March 2020, 49 places of worship received funding from the Home Office, including 27 mosques [S08].

Following Awan being commissioned by the government to establish a new working definition for Islamophobia, he partnered with the UK's leading independent race and equality think tank, the Runnymede Trust, and helped create a new working definition for Islamophobia in a landmark report for the Runnymede Trust, alongside his report for the Minister for Faith and Communities. Prior to this new definition the Runnymede Trust, two decades ago, were first credited with coining the term 'Islamophobia', as 'the shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam…' (Runnymede Trust, 1997: 1). In 2017, the Runnymede Trust invited Awan to write a chapter that would formulate a separate new community-based definition for Islamophobia. It formed part of the report: *Islamophobia: Still A Challenge for Us All*. As a result of this research, Awan was invited by the Co-Chairs of the APPG on British Muslims to present oral and written evidence on a new working definition of Islamophobia. The APPG on British Muslims adopted Awan's recommendation about using perceived Muslim identity in their public inquiry in 2018 [S09].

Since then, this definition of Islamophobia, despite being in its infancy, has been officially adopted by over 800 organisations, including the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, Scottish Nationalist Party Westminster, the Mayor of London, Plaid Cymru, the National Union of Students and seventeen borough, city and town councils [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S01: Evidence from APPGI, APPGBM and General Secretary
Summary Record produced by APPGI, APPGBM and General Secretary **[Named Corroborator 001]**

S02 Evidence from CPS
Testimonial - National Senior Policy Adviser on Hate Crime, CPS

S03 Evidence from Faith Matters
Testimonial - Founder and Director, Faith Matters

S04 Evidence from Tell MAMA
Tell MAMA report: *Annual Monitoring, Cumulative Extremism, and Policy Implications,* and Testimonial - Director, Tell MAMA

S05 Evidence from Faith Associates
Testimonial – CEO, Faith Associates

S06 Evidence from Twitter UK
Joint blog by Professor Awan and Twitter UK
https://blog.twitter.com/en_gb/topics/company/2020/twitteruk-amhwguk-working-partnership.html

S07 Evidence from Government Department for Communities and Local Government
Testimonials - Deputy Director, Integration and Faith, Department for Communities and Local Government and Minister for Faith and Communities, Department for Communities and Local Government

S08 Evidence from Home Office
Hyperlink and screenshot - Home Office announcement of funding for mosques

S09 Evidence from APPG on British Muslims
Testimonial - Co-Chairs of the APPG on British Muslims

S10 Evidence of formal adoption of definition of Islamophobia
Hyperlinks and screenshots - councils, political parties and other organisations who have formally adopted the definition of Islamophobia