

Editorial

FITNAH BOOK (FACEBOOK) AND NARCISSISM: THE POST NORMAL BEHAVIOURS OF MUSLIMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Professor Dr G. Hussein Rassool
Professor of Islamic Psychology

What are the challenging issues faced by the Muslims in the island of Mauritius? There are several emerging issues and problems faced by Muslims including acculturation, addiction, domestic abuse, rising divorce rate and marital breakdown, various ideologies of the Ummah, and institutional discrimination. However, in this paper, I will focus on the dangers of excessive social media usage, both from an Islamic perspective and the effects on mental health. In part I will focus on acculturation and Facebook addiction.

When Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh one of the most influential Muslim scholars of the late 19th and early 20th century, famously declared that he had found Islam but no Muslims abroad (in the West), and Muslims but no Islam at home (in the Muslim world), he wanted to bring home the message that Muslims were more and more drifting away not only from the original revealed message of Islam, but also from the power and guidance both of sound reasoning and pure human nature, or instinct.¹ This statement reflects a significant problem faced by

¹Cited in Omer, S. (2018). *Westernization and Muslims' Spiritual Apathy*.
Source: IslamiCity Jan 10, 2018,

Muslims in Mauritius. In contemporary times, Muslims are being acculturated in Western values and practices. Acculturation is defined as “a process of cultural contact and exchange through which a person or group comes to adopt certain values and practices of a culture that is not originally their own, to a greater or lesser extent. The result is that the original culture of the person or group remains, but it is changed by this process.”² Unfortunately, it is the Muslim youths that are repeatedly the biggest victim of the whole tragedy. This means that Muslim youths are adopting the practices and values of Western culture, and their own Islamic cultural identity is being diluted.

In this context, some young Muslims became very weak and vulnerable, and are increasingly abandoning their traditional religious beliefs and values in favour of the glamour of Western lifestyles, pervasive secularism, irreligious modernism and liberalism. Acculturation brings out a detachment from the teaching of Islamic beliefs and practice. It is stated that “Westernization, as a process whereby societies come under or adopt Western culture, including lifestyle, religion, philosophy, entertainment, government and values, is often cited as one of the main reasons for a rapid decline in Muslims’ religiosity. It is often perceived that being Westernised is the antithesis of being a good Muslim.”³

<https://www.islamicity.org/13984/westernization-and-muslims-spiritual-apathy/>, (accessed 26 August 2022).

² Cole, N.L. (2020). *Understanding Acculturation and Why It Happens*. ThoughtCo, Dec. 30, 2020, [thoughtco.com/acculturation-definition-3026039](https://www.thoughtco.com/acculturation-definition-3026039).

³ Omer, S. (2018). *Westernization and Muslims’ Spiritual Apathy*.

Muslim youths often find themselves painfully torn between Islamic culture and lifestyles and the inviting, seducing, provocative, liberalising lifestyles of Westerners. This is reflected in their modified dress code for female, Mohican haircuts for men, the wearing of “Friendship band” (It is not only for friendship but for protection from evil, danger and fear). The latter adoption is pure *shirk*. For young *hijabi* women, there is a growing trend in Mauritius and elsewhere, in the wearing of leggings or really tight clothes with lots of make-up. This is fashion trend and beats the whole purpose of wearing *hijab*. The wearing of the *hijab* for women is for modesty, piety and representing their identity.

The main criterion on clothing of a woman is understood as the covering the private parts. (Except hands and face) and not wearing transparent, short and tight clothes. Allah says in the Qur’an (interpretation of the meaning): “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, headcover, apron), and to draw their veils all over *Juyubihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islam), or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their

adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful.”⁴ With regard to the Ahadith, it was narrated from Safiyyah bint Shaybah that ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) When Allah revealed: "... and to draw their veils all over their *Juyubihinna* (i.e., their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)..." (Qur'an.24:31) they tore their *Murat* (woollen dresses or waist-binding clothes or aprons etc.) and covered their heads and faces with those torn Muruts.⁵

The following is an abridged version of a poem regarding the *hijab*:

When u wear the hijab u feel good
Coz u know it's right
But when u put on your tight-fitting clothes
The angels take flight
And stop singing your praises
You're caught up in the middle
Being Muslim and Western
Your mind knows that its Allah u should obey and follow
But you're confused
About which pill to swallow
And u try and follow the middle path
Even though u know their ain't no such thing
But u just can't resist not wearing bling
With tight clothing
Gaining reward
And losing it

⁴ An-Nur 24:31

⁵ Bukhari. Sahih al-Bukhari 4758. In-book reference: Book 65, Hadith 280. USC-MSA web (English) reference: Vol. 1, Book 60, Hadith 281.

When u put on your tight jeans and top
Should u not stop and think?⁶

According to Abul A 'La Mawdudi "The Shari'ah forbids the use of all those things which are injurious to man's physical, mental and moral existence. The law in Islam requires men and women to wear dignified and decent clothes. The Muslim youth of today feel that in order to be civilized, one has to be Westernized in their clothes, in their mind, in their education, and this is due to what they come across in the media, through social media, and the internet." ⁷It is ironic to observe little girls in hijab going to *madrasah* accompanied by their Western dress mothers (without hijab)!

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "You will most certainly follow the ways of those who came before you, arm's length by arm's length, forearm's length by forearm's length, hand span by hand span, until even if they entered a hole of a mastigure (lizard) you will enter it too." They said: "O Messenger of Allah, (do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?" He said: "Who else?"⁸

In addition to the imitation Western values through the process of acculturation, the media also construct the social and political reality of Muslims. The media plays a very important role in this negative propagation and changing of mindset in the Muslim

⁶Cullen, H (2008). What's the point. Wearing a hijab. <http://www.therevival.co.uk/blogs/hannahcullen/hijab-tight-clothing>, (accessed 26 August 2022).

⁷Mawdūdi, A. I. (1980). Towards understanding Islam (New rev. ed.). Leicester: Islamic Foundation.

⁸ Ibn Majah.

nations especially the youth. The youths are being told that whatever practice of Islam has been prescribed is backward and not for this time. There seemed to have a better way out there which needs to be adopted. The media propagates obscenity and impermissible acts making it acceptable as part of the norms of society. The media encouraged and promoted those “integrated Muslims” (Muslims adopting Western values and code of attire and behaviours) as “good Muslims” in contrast with those “fundamentalist” who lived by the laws of *Shari’ah*. Our main problem as a Muslim community is that we do not condemn such people who are out to change the Islamic culture under the name of “growth” and “liberation.” In fact, we have handed the media platforms to those “integrated Muslims”.

Social media has made people celebrities overnight and many Muslims, single and married with grandchildren have failed to recognise the dangers and vulnerability they faced by exposing themselves on Fitnah book (Facebook) and other social media platforms. There is a now a body of literature to suggest the addictive nature of Facebook.⁹ Facebook addiction or my coined term of “Fitnah addiction” is common among female Muslims who engage in excessive, compulsive Facebook use. The common trend among a minority of female Muslims is the uploading countless selfies, writing intimate status updates, and checking notifications every other minute. For example, some females, old and young, are changing their photos on Fitnah book almost every day posing with different body language and

⁹Kuss, D.J., & Griffiths, M.D. (2011). Online social networking and addiction-a review of the psychological literature. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 8(9), 3528–3552.

clothing. This is happening to married women, even young grandmothers. They believe they are photogenic and need to expose themselves, and what is surprising, with the connivance of their husbands. This post-normal behaviour of female Muslims has led to some form of narcissism, especially “grandiose narcissism.”¹⁰ The users of Facebook, with grandiose narcissist tendencies have the characteristics of being more extroverted, callous, and genuinely self-absorbed and obsessed with social media. It is worth pointing out that it is not social media that is actually the problem, merely a symptom. These female grandiose narcissist Muslims need both psychological and spiritual treatment.

¹⁰ McCain, J. L., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). Narcissism and social media use: A meta-analytic review. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(3), 308–327. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000137>