

## Islamophobia and Values in Western Societies: An Analysis of the Impacts on Muslim Men of Islamophobic Attacks in the UK

Batı Topluluklarında İslamofobi ve Değerler:  
İngiltere'deki İslamofobik Saldırıların Müslüman  
Erkekler Üzerindeki Etkilerinin Analizi

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**Abstract:** The populations and governments of Western societies are usually proud of the values they claim to be the foundation of their multicultural and pluralistic societies. Over the past few decades, the Western world has witnessed a surge in hate crimes, including racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia. This has sparked discussions about the authenticity of Western societies in upholding universal or Western values. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Islamophobia on universal or Western values. It is crucial to clarify that the research does not seek to make sweeping generalizations about these values. Instead, its focus is a thorough examination of the decline in the beliefs of Muslim men in these values, particularly in response to the growing incidents of Islamophobic attacks. The study delved into two specific Islamophobic assaults to shed light on the concerning extent of Islamophobia, suggesting a potential threat to both universal and Western values as well as social cohesion in the UK. Through individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews, Muslim men residing in the UK were engaged to explain the repercussions of these distressing Islamophobic incidents on their lives, perspectives, and notably, their beliefs in universal or Western values. The findings of the study revealed that acts of Islamophobic violence, particularly those directed at vulnerable and disabled Muslims, have a detrimental impact on the beliefs of Muslim males in the UK regarding universal or Western principles and values. The Muslim men in the study strongly criticised the bystanders in these incidents, expressing their disappointment in the lack of protection for the vulnerable and disabled victims, while emphasizing the link between “bystander apathy” and societal values. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of incorporating Islamic values into the education of their children.

**Keywords:** Islamophobia, Values, Muslim Men, Vulnerable Victims, Bystander Apathy

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**Öz:** Batı toplumlarının halkları ve hükümetleri genellikle, çok kültürlü ve çoğulcu yapılarının temeli olduğunu iddia ettikleri değerlerle gurur duymaktadırlar. Batı dünyasında son yıllarda ırkçılık, ayrımcılık ve İslamofobi gibi çeşitli nefret suçlarında artış görülmektedir ve bu durum Batılı toplumların evrensel veya Batılı değerlere gerçekten ne kadar sahip çıktığına dair sorgulamaların ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı İslamofobi'nin evrensel ya da Batılı değerlere nasıl zarar verdiğini incelemektir. Ancak bu araş-

tırmanın amacı evrensel ya da Batılı değerler hakkında geniş çıkarımlar yapmak değil; daha ziyade, artan İslamofobik saldırılar nedeniyle Müslüman erkeklerin bu değerlere olan inançlarındaki düşüşü kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektir. Bu çalışmada, Batılı ülkelerdeki evrensel veya Batılı değerlere ve toplumsal dayanışmaya yönelik gerçek bir tehdit oluşturduğu görülen İslamofobi'nin en-dişe verici düzeyini göstermek için iki spesifik İslamofobik saldırı incelenmiştir. Bu iki İslamofobik olayın hayatları, düşünceleri ve özellikle evrensel veya Batı değerlerine olan inançları üzerindeki etkisini araştırmak amacıyla Birleşik Krallık'ta ikamet eden Müslüman erkeklerle bireysel yarı yapılandırılmış ve derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, özellikle savunmasız ve engelli Müslümanlara yönelik İslamofobik şiddet eylemlerinin, Birleşik Krallıktaki Müslüman erkeklerin evrensel veya Batılı ilke ve değerlere olan inançları üzerinde zararlı bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Müslüman erkekler, olaylara seyirci kalanları, savunmasız ve engelli mağdurları korumadıkları için sert bir şekilde kınayarak "seyirci kalma hissizliği" ile toplumsal değerler arasında bağlantı kurmuşlardır. Son olarak katılımcılar, çocuklarının eğitiminde İslami değerlerin önemini vurgulamışlardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslamofobi, Değerler, Müslüman Erkekler, Savunmasız Mağdurlar, Seyirci Kalma Hissizliği

(Genişletilmiş Türkçe özet makalenin sonundadır.)

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to shed light on the repercussions of escalating Islamophobia on Muslim men and its corrosive impact on the core values of Western nations. The focus of this study is specifically on the reactions of Muslim males living in the UK in response to incidents of Islamophobia. This argument posits that delving into the reactions, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of Muslim males in relation to Islamophobia yields a more profound comprehension and insight into the escalating prevalence of Islamophobia in Western societies, as well as its detrimental impact on societal values. The paper posits that instances of Islamophobia have a detrimental effect on the beliefs of Muslim males towards universal or Western values, as these incidences tend to specifically target the very principles that constitute these values. This argument constitutes a significant and genuine contribution of the study to the existing literature. Previous research has mostly overlooked the examination of the relationship between Islamophobia and values, and hardly any research has been conducted

on the influence of Islamophobic attacks on Muslims' adherence to universal or Western values. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to address and fill the existing research gap in the literature.

This article delineates the findings of a research study exploring the repercussions of Islamophobic attacks on Muslim males in the UK. Against the backdrop of some shocking terrorist incidents in the early decades of the twenty-first century, Muslims residing in Western countries have come under considerable scrutiny within the realms of politics and society. Numerous research and reports (e.g., Runnymede Trust, 1997, 2017; Allen, 2010; Kaln, 2011; Awan & Zempi, 2015; Jeory, 2016; Dauda, 2020) have indicated a notable increase in Islamophobia within Western societies over the past few decades, resulting in heightened challenges and difficulties faced by those adhering to the Islamic faith. For instance, Muslim women have felt a greater sense of vulnerability due to the distinctive nature of their attire, which identified them as Muslim. Consequently, they began to develop apprehensions about travelling alone and faced difficulties in carrying out their routine tasks (Jeory, 2016). On the other hand, research examining the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim men in the Western world is very scarce. Thus, to cover the gap in the literature, this study concentrates exclusively on the effects of Islamophobia on Muslim males.

The findings of this research indicated that Muslim males residing in the UK express strong disapproval towards Islamophobic incidents occurring in the UK, perceiving them as contradictory to the values typically held by Western societies. The participants emphasized absolute unacceptability of Islamophobic attacks, particularly when directed at highly vulnerable Muslims in the UK. According to the participants, these assaults not only contradict fundamental values such as respect, tolerance, and human rights but also encompass discriminatory practices related to ableism. The intersection of religion, race, and nationality with disability among Muslim individuals targeted in Islamophobic assaults within the UK appears to further erode the faith of Muslims in the principles and values upheld in Western societies. A key rationale provided by the participants for their ever-increasing loss of faith in universal or Western values was the phenomenon of "bystander apathy" exhibited by those present during incidents of Islamophobic attacks against vulnerable or disabled Muslim victims. Finally, the respondents emphasized the crucial role that Islamic values play in the upbringing and education of their children. This is particularly significant in a context where prejudice, discrimination, and Islamophobia pose threats to the values of Western societies, as observed in the case of the UK.

The topic of values has been the subject of intense debate worldwide in recent decades. The arguments often focus on the discussion of universal values or Western values, making it necessary to initially examine the concept of values and the relationship between universal values and Western values.

## **Values**

The term “values” pertains to the fundamental principles, norms, or beliefs that serve as a compass, shaping and impacting an individual’s conduct, preferences, and the process of making choices and decisions. They symbolise the values and principles that an individual deems significant and deserving of pursuit in their life. Values are usually inherent and possess the ability to mould an individual’s disposition, preferences, and behaviours (Seligman et al., 2013). They act as a moral compass, assisting individuals in making decisions concerning ethical principles and values that are meaningful to them. Values serve as the driving forces behind human behaviours, serving as the foundation upon which acts and decisions are assessed for their inherent worth (Hatley, 2019).

Universal values refer to concepts and beliefs that are deemed to be universally applicable and pertinent to all individuals, irrespective of their cultural, geographical, or socioeconomic context. These principles are commonly seen as foundational and beyond the limitations of any particular culture or geographical area. Universal values are derived from the notion that there are specific principles and entitlements that need to be cherished and shown reverence by all people, irrespective of their cultural or national affiliations. Universal values encompass a range of principles that are widely regarded as fundamental and applicable to all humans. These values include, but are not limited to, human rights, justice, equality, freedom, and the inherent dignity of every person (Gabriel, 2022).

On the other hand, Western values encompass a collection of concepts, beliefs, and conventions that have traditionally been linked to the cultures and societies of Western Europe and North America throughout history. The formation of these principles has been shaped by the intellectual, political, and cultural legacies of the Western world, encompassing concepts derived from ancient Greek civilization, the Enlightenment era, and the Christian heritage. Western values encompass a range of principles, such as individualism, democracy, secularism, capitalism, and the rule of law (Haron et al., 2020).

There exists a certain degree of overlap between universal values and the values that are commonly associated with Western societies. Both Western and

non-Western cultures place importance on fundamental principles such as human rights, peace, and justice. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that there are notable distinctions. As an illustration, Western culture commonly assigns greater significance to individualism and secularism, whereas non-Western cultures typically assign greater significance to collectivism and religion. Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge that Western values do not constitute a singular, homogeneous framework. Diverse sets of values are observed throughout various Western civilizations, with notable intra-cultural variations being prevalent. For instance, the values upheld in the United States may exhibit disparities when compared to the values embraced in France. Despite these differences, there exists a fundamental collection of values that are broadly shared among the majority of Western civilizations. The formation of these ideals has been influenced by Western philosophy, history, and religion. Furthermore, their perspectives have been shaped by Western economic and political institutions (Inglehart, 2013).

In the UK context, the concept of “Fundamental British Values” (FBV) encompasses a collection of fundamental principles and values that have significant importance within the UK, namely in relation to education, citizenship, and the promotion of social harmony. The purpose of these values is to foster and strengthen specific fundamental elements of British society. The prominence of the notion of Fundamental British Values in the UK increased during the early 21st century, particularly inside educational institutions, where they have been integrated into the curriculum. The Fundamental British Values encompass a set of four core principles that are widely regarded as indispensable to the foundation of British society. These principles include “democracy”, “the rule of law”, “individual liberty”, and “mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. These core principles serve as the foundation of British citizenship within a contemporary and multicultural society in Britain (Panjwani, 2016).

As previously discussed, it is important to note that values can vary in their conceptualization and definitions within specific contexts in Western countries. However, in general discourse and debates, the terms “universal values” and “Western values” are often used interchangeably, typically referring to shared values such as human rights, justice, equality, and freedom of speech. On the other hand, in the Western world, values are frequently at the forefront of discussions concerning immigrants, particularly Muslims, and their integration into Western societies (Panjwani, 2016). Therefore, it would be advantageous to examine these values in the context of discussion pertaining to Muslims residing in Western nations.

## **Values, Muslims, and Islamophobia in the Western World**

The people and governments of Western cultures often express a sense of pride in the values they assert as the basis of their multicultural and diverse societies. There are several assertions suggesting that universal values, particularly those pertaining to human rights, are fundamentally rooted in Western ideology (Bielefeldt, 2000). Furthermore, Huntington (1996) argues that human rights, along with democracy, liberalism, and political secularism, are inherently belong to Western civilizations. According to his (1996) perspective, individuals from other civilizations must embrace Western values and effectively assimilate into Western civilizations to fully enjoy the benefits of human rights. However, Muslims residing in the Western countries, which Huntington (1996) identifies as the symbols of values and human rights, have encountered a range of discriminatory incidents, including racism and Islamophobia. These acts of prejudice and hostility seem to directly contravene the very values that these societies proudly espouse.

Today, the current perception of Islam in Western societies is usually characterised as a sectarian and fundamentalist faith that subjugates women, upholds outdated and mediaeval values, and endorses acts of violence (Sarwar & Raj, 2016). The discourse surrounding Islamophobia often revolves around the examination of values, particularly the assertion that some cherished universal or Western values, such as freedom of expression, gender equality, and tolerance, are perceived to be at risk due to the actions of Muslims (Sayyid, 2014). These discussions mostly focus on the extent to which Muslim minorities identify with and adopt universal or Western values, as well as their sense of belonging within these societies. According to Kunst et al.'s (2013) study on the perception of Islamophobia among Muslims, individuals who exhibited Islamophobic tendencies were commonly characterised by the participants as harbouring fear towards Islam due to their perception of it as being intolerant and incongruent with, or potentially detrimental to, universal or Western values such as democracy and women's rights. Nevertheless, scholarly research has paid scarce attention to the relationship between Islamophobia and values, particularly regarding the detrimental effects that Islamophobic assaults exert on universal or Western values.

In the Western world, the term "Islamophobia" has garnered notable attention, especially following the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in the USA and the July 7, 2005, bombings on the London Underground in the UK. The rise of more instances of terrorist attacks in Western countries, such as the Charlie Hebdo tragedy in Paris on January 7,

2015, has sparked intensified debates over the integration of Muslim minority populations within Western communities. In this socio-political context, there has been a growing ambiguity around the distinctions between critiquing extremism and terrorism on the one hand, and Islamophobia on the other. Similarly, the borders between defending liberal values, Islamophobia, and the securitization of society have become increasingly blurry (Mondon & Winter, 2017).

Mondon and Winter (2017) apply the concepts of “illiberal” and “liberal” Islamophobia to distinguish the different discourses and practices of Islamophobia in Western world. The concept of illiberal Islamophobia is often linked to traditional forms of racism and is frequently associated with the far right and the authoritarian suppression of minority populations and their rights. The concept of liberal Islamophobia involves the creation of a generalised perception and portrayal of Muslim or Islamic faith and culture as fundamentally incompatible with certain basic values upheld by an idealised and rationalised culturally uniform, superior, and enlightened Western society, or a particular Western nation. This depiction presents a hypothetical scenario whereby the West is posited as representing advancement, including values such as democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, gender and sexual equity, and ironically (in terms of the way in which Muslims were and are targeted), tolerance (Mondon & Winter, 2017).

The prevailing body of literature often centres its study on examining the relationship between Western values and Islamic values, assessing the degree of compatibility between these two value systems, and exploring the extent to which Muslims residing in Western nations adopt universal or Western ideals. For example, Norris and Inglehart (2012) contend that Muslim migrants tend to gradually assimilate into the host culture of Western nations, as suggested by assimilation theories, rather than steadfastly maintaining pre-existing beliefs upon arrival. In a similar vein, Ibrahim (2006) posits that there exists compatibility between Western and Islamic values, and that the enduring allure of inclusiveness and pluralism will serve as a catalyst for fostering understanding and reconciliation among diverse civilizations and cultures. According to Saeed (2009) an emerging Western tradition of Islam is grappling with various contemporary concerns such as gender equality, secular law, freedom of expression, democracy, human rights. These are the famous universal or Western values, and Muslims residing in Western societies have recently initiated the development of methodological instruments and principles that will serve as the intellectual foundation of this approach. Despite a substantial body of research largely investigating the extent to which Muslims re-



siding in Western nations adopt universal or Western values, there exists a dearth of studies that explore the influence of challenges faced by Muslims, including Islamophobia, on their adherence to universal or Western values. This article aims to contribute to the literature by exploring how Islamophobic attacks affect Muslims' beliefs in universal or Western values.

In the Western world, there is a prevailing perception that Muslims and their religion, Islam, are often seen as incompatible with universal or Western values. However, it is noteworthy that certain instances of racism or Islamophobia in Western nations in recent years appear to contradict these universal or Western values. This present study especially centres its attention on two distinct instances of Islamophobic attacks that occurred in London. In the following section, I will provide a brief account of the aforementioned attacks and emphasize the necessity of conducting a thorough analysis of these attacks in order to reveal how Islamophobic attacks may damage the beliefs of Muslims in (usually idealised) universal or Western values.

### **The Cases of Two Islamophobic Assaults towards Vulnerable and Disabled Muslims in London**

In recent years, there has been a notable spike in Islamophobic assaults in Western world and in the UK. This study aims to investigate two specific incidents of Islamophobic attacks, that occurred on London buses during October 2015. The research participants cited these two incidents as examples to underscore the adverse impacts of Islamophobia. Both incidents took place in London within the same week, sparking extensive discussions and debates among Muslim communities in the UK over the concerning prevalence of Islamophobia and its relationship with values. In the context of these assaults, it is crucial to carefully consider both the victims and the offenders.

In the first attack, the individuals assaulted were two females of middle age who were attired in headscarves, with one of them visibly pregnant. The person responsible for the incident in question was identified as a middle-aged black lady. The significance of this case is further illustrated by the fact that individuals from black communities have been disproportionately impacted by experiences of prejudice and xenophobia. In the second incident, the victim was an elderly, disabled Muslim male using a Zimmer frame. Despite the victim's significant vulnerability and disability, the attacker was a physically fit 25-year-old male belonging to an ethnic community who was accompanied by his two-year-old daughter in a pram. Both incidents were anonymously filmed and shared on social media platforms. The vid-

eos were extensively circulated on social media, evoking considerable response. Therefore, the 25-year-old man felt compelled to hand himself in.

### ***A Woman Attacked Two Muslim Women One of Whom was Pregnant***

In 2015, a widely circulated video lasting around five minutes captured an incident on a London bus. The video depicted a black woman expressing intense anger towards two Muslim women wearing headscarves, one of whom was visibly pregnant. The video does not reveal the reason for her fury. The case's context is unknown. The perpetrator employed inappropriate language and directed derogatory remarks against the two Muslim women. Furthermore, she named them as "Isis Bitches" while vociferously shouting them to "go back to your f\*\*\*\* country". Moreover, she expressed a threat to physically harm one of the women, specifically targeting the pregnant lady by expressing an intention to kick her in the stomach. She repeatedly used the same inappropriate language, numerous expletives, and threats, while the remaining passengers opted to maintain a state of silence.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Chef Kashif Samuel Threw an Old Muslim Pensioner's Walking Frame Off a London Bus***

During the same week, there was another video that garnered significant attention, depicting an incident that occurred on another bus in London. The background of the case is unknown. A young man (Chef Kashif Samuels), belonging to an ethnic community, engaged in verbally offensive behaviour towards an elderly and disabled Muslim man, who was speaking in Turkish, with a Zimmer frame. Notably, this incident occurred despite the presence of the young individual's two-year-old daughter in a pram. The perpetrator accused the elderly man, asserting that his purpose for coming to the UK was just to exploit the welfare system. Then he said "I'll put a pig's c\*\*\* in your mouth. What is Allah going to say about that?" Chef Kashif Samuels kept swearing about the elderly man's mother and sister, and then he threatened him to throw his Zimmer frame off the bus when it stops. So indeed he threw the old man's Zimmer frame in front of all other passengers who were silent throughout the assault and reluctant to intervene.<sup>2</sup>

1 For more detail: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/video-shout-abuse-muslims-women-bus-london>

2 For more detail: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3305610/Chef-threw-Muslim-pensioner-walking-frame-London-bus-racist-rant-jailed-16-weeks.html>

## **The Study**

The paper incorporates specific findings obtained from research for which I personally oversaw every stage of the data gathering process. The inclusion of data in this study is restricted to information derived solely from interviews conducted with Muslim men in the UK, aligning with the study's specific scope and purpose. The primary objective of the main study was to investigate the difficulties faced by Muslim males residing in the UK, a country where the prevalence of Islamophobia has experienced a significant rise, and the study specifically concentrated on examining the concept of Muslim masculinities. For the purpose of this study, the selected research method involves individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews. This approach enabled the identification and exploration of plenty of interesting subjects (e.g., the impact of motivational identity principles on Muslim masculinities), one of which was the relationship between values and Islamophobia (e.g., how Islamophobic attacks impact Muslim men's beliefs in Western values such as respect, tolerance, human rights, etc.).

## ***Methodology***

The study employs qualitative research approaches and applies an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) perspective. In this study, the researcher has chosen to employ the phenomenological approach in order to investigate and provide insight into the difficulties faced by Muslim males residing in the UK by exploring their lived experiences. For the purpose of this study, individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews were employed as the chosen research method. Purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling were used in the study as the methods of sampling that are included in the category of non-probability sampling methods. It involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specified criteria that are derived from the research questions. The predetermined selection criteria for this research were individuals who identify as Muslim, aged 18 or older men, currently residing in the UK, and experienced challenges as a Muslim. A total of 21 individual interviews were carried out with Muslim males residing in the UK, representing three distinct socio-cultural backgrounds, namely Algerian, Pakistani, and Somali. During the course of the interviews, it was observed that while the participants were primarily residing in London and Birmingham, a significant number of them had previously resided in various regions across the UK, including Glasgow, Cardiff, Swansea, and others. The individuals had ample experience residing in many cities within the UK. The

interviews were conducted from February 12, 2019, through August 20, 2021, utilising a combination of face-to-face and online interview methods. All of the participants completed the informed consent forms. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent by using a recording device to capture the conversations, which were afterwards transcribed in an exact manner.

The participants were requested to provide accounts of their personal experiences in the UK as a Muslim man, such as challenges encountered as a result of their religious beliefs, ethnic background, race, and gender. Through the utilisation of follow-up questions, I endeavoured to delve more profoundly into their thoughts, reactions, and emotions. For instance, I asked the second- or third-generation participants to share their school experiences and to give specific examples of difficulties they encountered because of their identities. Then, with the follow-up questions, I asked them to explain what they thought, how they felt, and how they overcame the negative effects of the incident.

The deployment of the individual semi-structured and in-depth interview method created an ideal setting for the participants to engage in discussions openly about their challenges, experiences, emotions, and thoughts. This was made possible due to the establishment of a genuine rapport between the researcher and the participants in the study. Besides, my "insider status" in the research as a Muslim man facilitated my ability to establish a robust rapport with the participants. In the interview sessions, particularly when delving into the discussion on Islamophobia and its impacts on Muslim communities in the UK, participants frequently made references to values. A few participants even offered examples of two recent Islamophobic incidents. In the subsequent interviews, I asked participants if they remembered these two incidents and if they would share their emotions and thoughts regarding them. A number of individuals recalled the incidents and expressed their feelings and thoughts. This article scrutinizes the perspectives and responses of the participants regarding two specific incidents of Islamophobic assaults. Drawing from the narratives offered by the participants, three primary themes emerged as the most recurrent in the dataset. These themes will now be explored in detail.

### **Islamophobic Attacks on Vulnerable and Disabled Muslims and the Values**

The study revealed that Muslim males expressed strong criticism towards many forms of Islamophobic assaults. However, they particularly condemned the Islamophobic attacks targeting vulnerable and handicapped Muslims in the UK, deeming

such acts as very unacceptable, frightening, inhumane, and barbaric. Islamophobia, classified as a kind of racism, was often regarded by participants as being inconsistent with universal values. However, it was observed that Islamophobic attacks specifically directed at vulnerable and disabled Muslims have the potential to undermine or even destroy the faith of Muslim males in universal or Western values.

As a women, being attacked with racist and Islamophobic sentiments in front of others is extremely terrifying. Attacking vulnerable people only because of their religious identity is, I think, one of the worst crimes against humanity. It is highly insulting, it might lead to depression, and it is very harmful for wellbeing. The victims will now feel this fear forever. They cannot move on their lives easily. They might be paranoid now. Even the unborn baby may feel the negative effects of the attack throughout his or her life. Most particularly, threatening the pregnant woman to kick her stomach... I am really speechless. I would have forced the attacker down from the bus. I am sure whoever watched these videos feels the same. The attackers must be taught that they are not superior and that everyone, regardless of their backgrounds, shares the same rights in society. That is the values (Salman).

In their explanations, the participants usually linked the racist or Islamophobic attacks with values. In his descriptions and judgements, Salman drew upon well recognised global values, including respect, tolerance, equality, and human rights. According to Salman, incidents of Islamophobia targeting vulnerable and handicapped Muslims constitute a direct violation of the rights of the victims and so require classification as crimes against humanity. Salman asserts that Islamophobic assaults and attacks, particularly targeting vulnerable and disabled Muslims, unequivocally undermine universal or Western values (in thought and action), including the adherence of Muslims to those values.

Similar to Salman, the rest of the participants also found it difficult when attempting to articulate their emotions over the Islamophobic assaults directed at vulnerable and handicapped Muslims.

It is a disgusting attack. Attacking an elderly man, attacking a disabled old man, I cannot find the word to describe. It is not related to racism or religion. It is much worse. It is a much more desperate situation. It is really disgusting. No human does that. It is a crime against humanity. No father could behave in this way. The attacker might be lunatic or full of hate. There is no other explanation. The attacker is very coward. He could not have dared to attack a healthy man (Yousuf).

Yousuf's narrative provides a strong indication that Muslim males perceive Islamophobic assaults against vulnerable and handicapped Muslims as fundamentally incompatible not just with universal or Western values but also with any form of value. It is observed that the participants perceive these assaults to be significantly worse than racism and Islamophobia. These assaults, according to Yousuf, constitute a crime against humanity.

### **The “Bystander Apathy” in Islamophobic Attacks, and Values**

According to bystander intervention model (BIM), in order for individuals to engage in the intervention of antisocial behaviour, it is imperative that they first perceive a critical situation, evaluate the situation as posing a threat to either themselves or others, assume personal responsibility for taking action, contemplate potential methods of assistance, and ultimately make the decision to intervene. It is worth noting that certain steps within this process may overlap or occur simultaneously (Latané & Darley, 1970). In instances of Islamophobic attacks, it is commonly seen that bystanders display a notable hesitancy to intervene, as evidenced by several recent events (e.g., the attacks examined in this study), therefore exhibiting a preference for maintaining silence. The analysis of the fundamental factors contributing to the hesitancy displayed by witnesses in instances of Islamophobic assaults has significant importance. Ghaffar made an interesting explanation:

When I saw the attacks, I felt the same anger and hate that the attacker showed the victims. I think one reason why the others did not intervene was freedom of speech. The concept of freedom of speech is given too much weight in the UK and in Western countries. It is extremely exaggerated. So, people do not intervene in any racist or Islamophobic attack because they consider these attacks to be acts of freedom of speech. These attacks should not be considered freedom of speech. But their understanding of respect and tolerance is very different. The apathy of the people around, the driver, the other passengers, is really shocking and annoying. This would not have been tolerated in a Muslim country (Ghaffar).

Ghaffar's narrative effectively illustrates the indistinct boundary between freedom of expression and Islamophobia, revealing that several individuals exhibit a lack of hesitation while transgressing this boundary in a reckless manner. According to Ghaffar, putting forward the concept of freedom of speech in Islamophobic assaults appears to compromise other universally recognised

values, like respect, tolerance, and human rights. Despite being widely regarded as a fundamental principle in global or Western contexts, the misuse of freedom of speech in this manner raises the concerns of Muslim men over its impact on these essential values. Ghaffar further highlighted the different perspectives on respect and tolerance between those from Western cultures and those who identify as Muslims. It is apparent that there exists a lack of consensus over the interpretation of universal or Western values among individuals from Western cultures and Muslims residing within the same community.

Individuals usually have a greater inclination to interfere in instances of antisocial behaviour when they hold a personal connection or familiarity with the victims affected by such acts. However, similar to uninvolved bystanders, those belonging to the in-group may confront with a significant amount of ambiguity due to their limited knowledge on the perpetrator, the circumstances, and other individuals present at the scene (Obermaier et al., 2023). In the cases examined for this study, it was noted that there were Muslims present at the venues of the attacks, yet they opted not to intervene.

I feel very uncomfortable when I see the videos. They could have been my own family (who were attacked). I felt very sad, angry ... I shocked, uh, why the driver and other passenger did not intervene. Some of the passengers were Muslims. I found very strange why others did not intervene the attack. I wish I was there and did what needs to be done. I got really angry (Abbas).

The participants expressed strong condemnation towards the bystanders involved in Islamophobic attacks, with a notable emphasis on the Muslim on-lookers who received a significantly greater amount of blame. The participants assert that the act of assisting and safeguarding vulnerable individuals from any form of aggression is considered a virtue and a value, as required by the principles of Islam. Hence, the participants deemed that Muslim bystanders in Islamophobic attacks were unable to meet their responsibilities of interfere as instructed by Islam in the face of any form of abuse.

In their study, Obermaier et al. (2023) found that individuals who identify as Muslims demonstrate a greater sense of personal responsibility to respond to instances of online hate speech against Islam. However, when it comes to offline situations, these individuals appear to have a greater degree of reluctance to intervene. Some participants in the research provided explanations for the potential reluctance of Muslim bystanders to get involved in Islamophobic attacks.

I felt very sad. Very sad for the lady. The attacker. It should not be so easy to be such intolerable and disrespectful despite living in a very multicultural society. Shame on her. Being a bystander feeds these kind of attacks. I think the bystanders, the immigrant bystanders, feel fear. Fear of ending up in a court. In particular, as a migrant. They do not want to take the risk. They do not think the law will protect them. Because they are migrants. So they prefer to be silent (Dawood).

Considerable academic research (e.g., Allen, 2010b; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010; Choudhury & Fenwick, 2013; Zempi, 2014) into the phenomenon of Islamophobia within Western societies has illuminated a prevailing trend wherein Muslim individuals display a hesitancy to lodge formal complaints with law enforcement authorities subsequent to experiencing racially or Islamophobic motivated assaults. Their hesitancy generally arises from a feeling that their grievances would not be given appropriate consideration, therefore eroding victims' trust and faith in the police and the criminal justice system as a whole (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). Similarly, as Dawood expressed, the immigrant and Muslim bystanders in Islamophobic assaults may feel afraid to be involved because of their mistrust of the police and the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, this example serves to demonstrate the erosion of Muslims' faith and confidence in universal or Western principles due to their experiences of unequal and unjust treatment.

### **The Role of Islamic Values, Islamophobia, and Education of Muslim Children in the UK**

Racist or Islamophobic attacks are perceived 'as attacks on the values, loyalties and commitments which are central to a person's sense of identity and self-worth, -their family honour, their friends, their culture, heritage, religion, community, history' (Runnymede Trust, 1997, p. 39). Cultural and religious values have significant importance among Muslim populations residing in Western nations, and Muslims frequently demonstrate a strong inclination to uphold their cultural and religious principles (Norris & Inglehart, 2012). However, they appear to experience some adverse emotions stemming from subtle expressions of Islamophobia and the influence of dominant cultural ideals or values that are perceived as incompatible with Islamic values.

Muslims should be solid in their faith and morals. In the British society, a lot of liberal ideals, values and Western ideologies are pushed on us as the truth. We see it all the time, in the news, in the media. You always see in the UK, like people who are in government, they say, for example, "Muslim culture is back-



wards”. Whenever Britain does something, they think, “oh, the whole world has to be like Britain. Others will have to have the same views with Britain because they are backwards”. And then I feel that a lot of Muslim in the UK, they become kind of pressured and feel inferiority complex (Vasam).

Vasam criticised the prevailing mainstream perspective in the UK, which asserts the absolute reality of Western standards and values while labelling anyone who disputes these values as a backward individual. Vasam posits that some British people perceive themselves and their cultural values as superior, while concurrently regarding others, particularly Muslims, as inferior and categorising them as backward. Vasam highlighted an intriguing observation on the impact of this dominant mainstream viewpoint in the UK, suggesting that it contributes to the development of an inferiority complex within the Muslim community. The perception of Muslim communities’ values as backward in the UK appears to exacerbate Islamophobia, while simultaneously diminishing the adherence of Muslim males to universal or Western values. Some participants in the current research strongly resisted the imposition of British values and Western ideology as an absolute fact. Moreover, they considered that labelling Islamic culture and beliefs as backward by British individuals as a form of Islamophobia.

According to the main research results, Muslim men exhibited a strong sense of duty in terms of imparting Islamic values to their children and safeguarding their cultural and religious identities in the UK. Muslim men participants, in their roles as fathers and leaders within their families, emphasised their responsibility to transmit their values to succeeding generations; that is also a crucial aspect of Muslim masculinities.

Raising children in the UK I think it’s relatively difficult because things are changing all the time. We are now told how we should govern our kids basically. And especially things that are being taught in schools are completely different. These are values that are completely different from ours as Muslims. We should raise our children with our own Islamic values (Zain).

Education holds significant importance within Muslim populations residing in the Western world, since Muslims often prioritise transmitting their cultural and religious values to their children through the educational process (Franceschelli & O’Brien, 2014). A significant number of Muslim families in European nations exhibit a preference for enrolling their children in supplementary schools with religious character over weekends, with the primary objective of ensuring the transmission of their cultural and religious values to the younger

generation (Alrasheedi & Almutawa, 2020). Like Zain's perspective, a significant number of participants in the current research stated that they perceive a discrepancy or incompatibility between the principles imparted in state schools and their own religious values. Consequently, they often seek out alternative educational institutions that align with their cultural or religious beliefs, aiming to provide their children with an education that is congruent with their own values.

## **Conclusion**

Employing the conceptual framework of values and Islamophobia, the article aims to understand the effects of examples of Islamophobia on Muslim men's beliefs in universal or Western values in the UK. However, the aim of this research is not to draw broad conclusions about universal or Western values; rather, the intention is to comprehensively examine the decline in Muslim men's beliefs in these values due to the increasing Islamophobic attacks. This study has examined the perspectives of Muslim men through interviews, focusing on their emotional and cognitive reactions to incidents of Islamophobia. The research has argued that the rising prevalence of Islamophobia and the brutal Islamophobic attacks towards vulnerable and disabled Muslims in the UK have led to a decline in Muslim men's beliefs in universal or Western values. The examination of Muslim men's responses to Islamophobia is an area that has received less attention in scholarly research. Thus, this study also seeks to address this gap in the existing literature.

The discourse and discussion around Islamophobia in Western world commonly link it to the notion that Islam and Muslims are perceived as incompatible with universal and Western values. This phenomenon also contributes to the legitimization of Islamophobia by arguing that safeguarding universal or Western values necessitates opposition to Islam and Muslims, so exacerbating and intensifying Islamophobic sentiments. However, it might be argued that Islamophobia has the potential to undermine the universal and Western ideals that are typically held in high regard by Western individuals and are claimed to be the foundation of their multicultural communities.

The results of the current research indicated that Muslim men in the UK strongly condemn Islamophobic assaults, particularly those targeting vulnerable and disabled individuals within the Muslim community, deeming them very reprehensible and constituting crimes against humanity. Islamophobic assaults that target

vulnerable and disabled Muslims within the UK appear to further erode the faith of Muslims in the principles and values upheld in Western societies. In addition, the “bystander apathy” seems to contribute Muslim men’s ever-increasing loss of faith in universal or Western values. Participants in the interview emphasised the significance they place on their children’s education, expressing their wish for their children to be raised with their own religious and cultural values. Finally, the research findings indicated that the rising prevalence of Islamophobia (specifically targeting vulnerable and disabled Muslims) appears to undermine the universal and Western values within Western cultures (in the UK in this case), thereby leading to a decline in the adherence of Muslim males to these values.

This article has some important potential to address the usually overlooked issues related to Muslim minorities in the UK. Firstly, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of Muslim men by focusing on their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and lived experiences. These dimensions of Muslim men in the UK are usually overlooked in discussions surrounding them, and policymakers or social workers could benefit from the insights provided in this research for the development of more holistic policies. Additionally, this study has the capacity to bring policymakers’ attention to the shortcomings in their integration policies, shedding light on the declining adherence of Muslim men to universal or Western values amid the escalating phenomenon of Islamophobia. Increased acknowledgment of Islamophobia as a significant threat by policymakers in the UK has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of integration policies, ultimately promoting social cohesion. In conclusion, directing attention towards understanding why Muslim men are losing their beliefs in universal or Western values, rather than simply accusing them of not embracing these values, could prove more effective in diagnosing the primary source of the problem.

Genişletilmiş Özet

**Batı Toplumlarında İslamofobi ve Değerler: İngiltere'deki İslamofobik Saldırıların Müslüman Erkekler Üzerindeki Etkilerinin Analizi**

Bu makale, Birleşik Krallıktaki Müslümanlara yönelik İslamofobik saldırıların yansımalarını inceleyen bir araştırmanın bulgularını özetlemektedir. Batı toplumlarının halkları ve hükümetleri genellikle, çok kültürlü ve çoğulcu yapılarının temeli olduğunu iddia ettikleri değerlerle gurur duymaktadırlar. Buna rağmen, son yıllarda Batı ülkelerinde yaşayan Müslümanlar gerek siyasi gerekse toplumsal tartışmaların hedefinde yer almaktadırlar. Batı dünyasında son yıllarda ırkçılık, ayrımcılık ve İslamofobi gibi çeşitli nefret suçlarında artış görülmektedir ve bu durum Batılı toplumların evrensel veya Batılı değerlere gerçekten ne kadar sahip çıktığına dair sorgulamaların ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur.

“Değerler” kavramı, pusula görevi gören, bireyin davranışını, tercihlerini, seçim ve karar verme sürecini şekillendiren ve etkileyen temel ilkeler, normlar veya inançlarla ilgilidir (Seligman vd., 2013). Evrensel değerler, kültürel, coğrafi veya sosyoekonomik bağlamlarına bakılmaksızın evrensel olarak uygulanabilen ve tüm bireyler için geçerli olduğu kabul edilen kavram ve inançları ifade eder. Öte yandan Batılı değerler, tarih boyunca Batı Avrupa ve Kuzey Amerika kültürleri ve toplumlarıyla geleneksel olarak bağlantılı olan bir dizi kavramı, inancı ve geleneği kapsar. Evrensel değerler ile Batı toplumlarıyla yaygın olarak ilişkilendirilen değerler arasında belli bir düzeyde örtüşme mevcuttur. Birleşik Krallık bağlamında, “Temel İngiliz Değerleri” kavramı, Birleşik Krallık içinde eğitim, vatandaşlık ve sosyal uyumun teşviki ile ilgili olarak büyük öneme sahip olan temel ilke ve değerleri ifade eder. Genellikle değerlerle ilgili tartışmalarda “evrensel değerler” ve “Batılı değerler” terimleri sıklıkla birbirinin yerine kullanılmaktadır ve tipik olarak insan hakları, adalet, eşitlik ve ifade özgürlüğü gibi ortak değerlere atıfta bulunmaktadır.

Batı dünyasında yaşayan Müslümanlar, yaşadıkları ülkelerdeki değerlerle ilgili tartışmalarda sıklıkla hedef alınmaktadırlar. Günümüzde Batı toplumlarındaki İslam algısı genellikle kadınları boyunduruk altına alan, modası geçmiş ve orta çağ değerlerini savunan, şiddet eylemlerini destekleyen mezhepçi ve kökten dinci bir inanç olarak nitelendirilmektedir (Sarwar ve Raj, 2016). İslamofobi çerçevesindeki söylemler genellikle değerler kavramı üzerinde, özellikle de ifade özgürlüğü, cinsiyet eşitliği ve hoşgörü gibi bazı evrensel veya Batılı değerlerin Müslümanların eylemleri nedeniyle risk altında olduğu iddiası etrafında şekillenmektedir (Sayyid, 2014). Batılı ülkelerde yaşayan Müslümanların

evrensel veya Batılı değerleri ne ölçüde benimsediklerini araştıran önemli sayıda araştırma olmasına rağmen, İslamofobi de dahil olmak üzere Müslümanların karşılaştığı zorlukların onların evrensel veya Batılı değerlere bağlılıkları üzerindeki etkisini araştıran araştırma neredeyse bulunmamaktadır. Bu makale, İslamofobik saldırıların Müslümanların evrensel veya Batılı değerlere olan inançlarını nasıl etkilediğini araştırarak literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma özellikle Londra'da meydana gelen iki farklı İslamofobik saldırıya ve onun Müslüman erkekler üzerindeki etkilerine odaklanmaktadır.

Son yıllarda Batı dünyasında ve İngiltere'de İslamofobik saldırılarda gözle görülür bir artış yaşanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Ekim 2015'te Londra şehrindeki otobüslerde meydana gelen iki spesifik İslamofobik saldırıyı incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma katılımcıları, İslamofobi'nin olumsuz etkilerini vurgulamak için bu iki olayı örnek olarak göstermişlerdir. Her iki olay da aynı hafta içinde Londra'da meydana gelmiştir ve Birleşik Krallıktaki Müslüman toplulukları arasında İslamofobi'nin endişe verici boyutu ve bunun değerler kavramıyla olan ilişkisi üzerinde hararetli tartışmalara yol açmıştır. İlk olayda Londra'daki bir otobüste başörtülü iki Müslüman bayana saldıran, ağır hakaretler eden, hatta hamile olduğu açık şekilde belli olan mağdur kadınlardan birini karnına tekme atmakla tehdit eden siyahi kökenli bir kadın yolcu videoya alınmıştır. Aynı hafta içinde gerçekleşen ikinci olayda ise, yine Londra'da bir otobüste Türk asıllı olan ve engelli sandalyesi kullanan yaşlı bir adama, genç siyahi bir adam tarafından sözlü ve fiziki İslamofobik bir saldırı gerçekleşmiştir. Bu makale, katılımcıların bu iki spesifik İslamofobik saldırı olayına ilişkin bakış açılarını ve tepkilerini incelemektedir. Katılımcıların sunduğu anlatılardan yola çıkarak elde edilen veri setinde en çok tekrarlanan üç ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırmanın bulguları, özellikle savunmasız ve engelli Müslümanlara yönelik İslamofobik şiddet eylemlerinin, Birleşik Krallıktaki Müslüman erkeklerin evrensel veya Batılı ilke ve değerlere olan inançları üzerinde zararlı bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Müslüman erkekler, olaylara seyirci kalanları, savunmasız ve engelli mağdurları korumadıkları için sert bir şekilde kınayarak "seyirci kalma hissizliği" ile toplumsal değerler arasında bağlantı kurmuşlardır. Son olarak katılımcılar, çocuklarının eğitiminde İslami değerlerin önemini vurgulamışlardır.

Araştırma bulguları, Müslüman erkeklerin birçok İslamofobik saldırı biçimine yönelik sert şekilde eleştirilerde bulunduğunu ve tepki gösterdiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ancak katılımcılar, İngiltere'deki savunmasız ve engelli Müslümanları hedef alan İslamofobik saldırıları özellikle daha sert biçimde kınamışlardır ve bu tür eylemlerin kabul edilemez, korkutucu, insanlık dışı ve barbarca eylemler olarak gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bir tür ırkçılık olarak sınıflandırılan İslamofobi, katı-

lımcılar tarafından sıklıkla evrensel değerlerle tutarsız olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Ancak özellikle savunmasız ve engelli Müslümanlara yönelik İslamofobik saldırıların, Müslüman erkeklerin evrensel veya Batılı değerlere olan inancını daha da zayıflatma, hatta yok etme potansiyeline sahip olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

“Seyirci Müdahale Modeli”, bireylerin anti sosyal davranışa müdahale edebilmesi için öncelikle kritik bir durumu algılaması, durumu kendisine veya başkalarına tehdit olarak değerlendirmesi ve olayın kişisel sorumluluğunu üstlenmesi gerektiğini öne sürer (Latané ve Darley, 1970). İslamofobik saldırı olaylarında, yakın zamanda yaşanan bazı olayların (örneğin, bu çalışmada incelenen saldırılar) da gösterdiği gibi, etraftakilerin müdahale etme konusunda dikkate değer bir tereddüt sergiledikleri ve dolayısıyla sessizliklerini korumayı tercih ettikleri yaygın olarak görülmektedir. İslamofobik saldırı olaylarında tanıkların sergilediği tereddüt duygusuna katkıda bulunan temel faktörlerin analizi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Katılımcılardan bazıları bu olayı ifade özgürlüğü kavramının yanlış veya kötüye kullanımı olarak değerlendirmişlerdir. Evrensel veya Batılı bağlamlarda yaygın bir şekilde temel bir ilke olarak kabul edilmesine rağmen, ifade özgürlüğünün bu şekilde kötüye kullanılması, Müslüman erkeklerin bu temel değerler üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin endişelerini artırmaktadır. Ayrıca bazı katılımcılar, İslamofobik saldırılara seyirci kalan göçmenlerin ve Müslümanların yaşadığı bu tereddüt duygusunu, polise ve adalet sistemine olan güvensizlikleri nedeniyle bu saldırılara karışmaktan korkabilecekleri ve sessiz kalmayı tercih edebilecekleri şeklinde değerlendirmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte bu örnek, Müslümanların kanun karşısında eşit ve adil olmayan muamelelere maruz kalma deneyimleri nedeniyle evrensel veya Batılı ilkelere olan inanç ve güvenlerinin sarsıldığını ortaya koymaya hizmet etmektedir.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre İngiltere’de yaşayan Müslüman erkekler çocuklarına İslami değerleri aşılama, onların kültürel ve dini kimliklerini korumak konusunda güçlü bir sorumluluk duygusu sergilemektedirler. Müslüman erkek katılımcılar, ailelerindeki baba ve lider rolleriyle, değerlerini gelecek nesillere aktarma sorumluluklarının önemini açıkça vurgulamışlardır ve bu aynı zamanda Müslümanların erkek kimlik algılarının da önemli bir yönüdür. Bu sebeplerle, Müslümanlar çoğu zaman kültürel ve dini değerlerini eğitim süreci aracılığıyla çocuklarına aktarmaya öncelik vermektedirler ve dolayısıyla da Batı dünyasında yaşayan Müslüman toplumlarında eğitim büyük önem taşımaktadır (Franceschelli ve O’Brien, 2014). Avrupa ülkelerindeki önemli sayıda Müslüman aile, kültürel ve dini değerlerinin genç nesillere aktarılmasını sağlamak amacıyla çocuklarını hafta sonları dini karakterli okullara ve kurslara kaydettirmeyi tercih etmektedirler (Alrasheedi & Almutawa, 2020). Mevcut araştırmadaki katılımcıların önemli bir kısmı, devlet okullarında öğretilen ilkeler ile kendi dini değerleri arasında bir

tutarsızlık veya uyumsuzluk algıladıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu nedenle sıklıkla kendi kültürel veya dini inançlarına uygun alternatif eğitim kurumları arayışına girerek çocuklarına kendi değerlerine uygun bir eğitim vermeyi amaçlamaktadırlar.

Sonuç olarak, değerler ve İslamofobi kavramsal çerçevesini kullanan bu makale, İngiltere'deki İslamofobi örneklerinin Müslüman erkeklerin evrensel veya Batılı değerlere olan inançları üzerindeki etkilerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut araştırmanın sonuçları, Birleşik Krallıktaki Müslüman erkeklerin, özellikle Müslüman toplum içindeki savunmasız ve engelli bireyleri hedef alan İslamofobik saldırıları şiddetle kınayarak bu tür saldırıların insanlığa karşı suç teşkil ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. Birleşik Krallıktaki savunmasız ve engelli Müslümanları hedef alan İslamofobik saldırıların, Müslümanların Batı toplumlarında benimse- nen ilke ve değerlere olan inancını ciddi derecede azalttığı görülmektedir. Ayrıca "seyirci ilgisizliği" durumu Müslüman erkeklerin evrensel veya Batılı değere lere olan inancını daha da azaltan bir diğer faktördür. Görüşmelerde katılımcılar, çocuklarının eğitime verdikleri önemi vurgulayarak, çocuklarının kendi dini ve kültürel değerleriyle yetişmelerini istediklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Son olarak, araştırma bulguları, İslamofobi'nin (özellikle savunmasız ve engelli Müslüman- ları hedef alan) artan yaygınlığının, Batı kültürlerindeki (bu örnekte Birleşik Krallık'ta) evrensel ve Batılı değerleri baltaladığını ve dolayısıyla Müslüman erkeklerin bu değerlere olan bağlılığın azalmasına yol açtığını vurgulamaktadır.

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