

**Title:** How Muslim men’s conceptualizations of masculinity serve as barriers and facilitators to addressing sexual harassment, coercion, and violence within our communities

**Author:**

Sobia Ali-Faisal, PhD, Department of Psychology, University of Prince Edward Island, Prince Edward Island, Canada

**Abstract:**

Despite current scandals in the North American Muslim community involving male religious preachers preying on young Muslim women (Apuzzo, 2015; Ali-Faisal, 2017), issues of sexual harassment and coercion of, and violence against, women in the North American Muslim community have received limited empirical attention, though Muslim grassroots organizations work to address the problems (e.g., HEART Women & Girls). Considering Muslim women are equally as susceptible to sexual harassment, coercion, and violence as non-Muslim women, exploration of the systemic roots of such gendered oppression within the Muslim community takes on further importance. In this quest, I conducted a qualitative study to explore the intersections between Muslim masculinity and Muslim men’s understandings of sexual harassment, coercion, and violence, as the literature has found an endorsement of hegemonic masculinity to be associated with expressions of physical and sexual violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009; Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002; Reidy, Smith-Darden, Cortina, Kernsmith, & Kernsmith, 2015). Following interviews and focus groups with a total of 14 Muslim men in Canada and the United States, conversations were transcribed and analysed for themes, including suggestions of how to address the issue of sexual harassment, coercion, and assault within Muslim communities. For the current paper, I will focus on how although participants all suggested turning to Islamic knowledge from both the Qur’an and Prophetic traditions as a primary means of addressing the problem, the nature of their suggestions differed markedly based on their approach to Islam, how their suggestions reflect the ways in which they view sexual aggression in the Muslim community, and how some of their woman-centred suggestions may practically be implemented within Muslim communities to address the issue.

**References:**

- Ali-Faisal, S. (2017, November 27). Handle with care or just don’t handle at all. *Muslimah Media Watch*. Retrieved from <http://www.muslimahmediawatch.org/2017/11/27/handle-with-care-or-just-dont-handle-at-all/>
- Apuzzo, M. (2015, February 14). Sexual abuse allegations against imam stir rifts in insular Illinois community. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/16/us/sexual-assault-suit-against-illinois-imam-highlights-a-communitys-divisions.html>
- Flood, M., & Pease, B. (2009). Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 10*(2), 125-142 doi: 10.1177/1524838009334131
- Murnen, S.K., Wright, C., & Kaluzny, G. (2002). If “boys will be boys,” then girls will be victims? A meta-analytic review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression. *Sex Roles, 46*, (11/12). 359-375.
- Reidy, D.E., Smith-Darden, J.P., Cortina, K.S., Kernsmith, R.M., & Kernsmith, P.D. (2015). Masculine discrepancy stress, teen dating violence, and sexual violence perpetration among adolescent boys. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 56*, 619-624.