Unveiling the Main Frames of Islamophobia: Insights from Spanish Experts through Delphi Research

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ENG Abstract. Since the Gaza war began on October 7th, there has been a surge in anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bias worldwide. This paper explores the complex social issue of Islamophobia from a framing perspective, and proposes a new methodological approach based on a Delphi research with Spanish experts in the field to better understand the complexities of anti-Muslim rejection. Among two rounds, experts reached a consensus on certain conceptual issues but noted differences in Islamophobia targeting. They recognized the influence of religion, sexual orientation, sex, skin color, and ethnicity in shaping anti-Muslim speech. The study also highlighted challenges in distinguishing between conflicting scenarios like gender versus race-ethnicity, illegality versus crime, and invasion versus terrorism. Overall, this research sheds light on the nuances of Islamophobia as a multidimensional concept. Additionally, it aims to offer timely framework to improve journalistic treatment of this phenomenon, based on experts' opinions.
Keywords: Islamophobia, hate speech, Delphi, Framing, prospective research.

ES Revelando los marcos principales de la islamofobia: opiniones de expertos españoles a través de la investigación Delphi

Resumen. Desde que comenzó la guerra de Gaza el 7 de octubre, ha habido un aumento del prejuicio anti-árabe y anti-musulmán en todo el mundo. Este artículo explora la compleja cuestión social de la islamofobia desde la perspectiva del encuadre (*framing*) y propone un nuevo enfoque metodológico basado en una investigación Delphi con expertos españoles en el campo para comprender mejor las complejidades del rechazo antimusulmán. Tras dos rondas de consultas, los expertos alcanzaron un consenso sobre ciertas cuestiones conceptuales, pero notaron diferencias en los objetivos de la islamofobia. Reconocieron la influencia de la religión, la orientación sexual, el sexo, el color de la piel y el origen étnico en la configuración del discurso anti-musulmán. El estudio también destacó los desafíos a la hora de distinguir entre escenarios conflictivos como género versus raza-etnia, ilegalidad versus crimen, e invasión versus terrorismo. En general, esta investigación arroja luz sobre los matices de la Islamofobia como concepto multidimensional. Además, pretende ofrecer recomendaciones oportunas para mejorar el tratamiento periodístico de este fenómeno, basadas en opiniones de expertos.
Palabras clave: Islamofobia, discursos del odio, Delphi, teoría del encuadre, investigación prospectiva.

1. Introduction

Islamophobia is a concerning and undeniable phenomenon in Europe, confirmed by international organizations representing civil society (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2017). The perception of the incidence of anti-Muslim hate among members of Muslim communities increased from 12% in 2010 to 25% in 2016 (European Commission, 2019). The normalization of racism is observed not only in society but also in the political sphere (Human Rights of the Council of Europe, 2020).

Although Islamophobia has long been in the public sphere, the recent Israel-Gaza war that started on October 7th, 2023, had far-reaching consequences that extended beyond the direct conflict with the rise of Islamophobia around the world. In fact, new data from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) documented an "appalling" rise in reported anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bias incidents since violence escalated, reflecting on a 216% increase in requests for help and reported bias incidents compared to the previous year (Bailey, 2023).

While academic discussions on identity and minorities have touched upon anti-Muslim discourse (Oliva-Martínez & Pérez de la Fuente, 2010), it is necessary to contribute innovative works that approach the topic from an empirical, analytical, and interdisciplinary perspective. Our study presents an original methodology to identify hate speech and messages containing anti-Muslim attitudes. This type of discriminatory hate speech against the Muslim population or Islam incites discrimination or violence based on racial hatred, xenophobia, sexual orientation, or other forms of intolerance (Cheng, 2015; Gagliardone *et al*., 2015; Kurić, 2022).

The research focuses on Spain's Muslim community, as an ethnically and culturally diverse community, comprising roughly 4% of the population (Alba-Rico, 2015). It also highlights the need for different institutions at the European and Spanish level to address Islamophobic discourse. As one of these institutional efforts, the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE) has been monitoring the evolution of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance in Spain (AL-RE-CO, 2021) to guide public policies on inclusion. Through these initiatives, this organization is implementing the new "Strategic Framework for citizenship, inclusion and against racism and xenophobia 2023-2027" (https://www.inclua sion.gob.es/oberaxe/en/index.htm).

This research will contribute to the implementation of a new methodological framework to analyze Islamophobia based on empirical evidence and insights from experts in the field. It makes a significant contribution to address the issue of Islamophobia as a complex issue (Bravo-López, 2010; Rosón-Lorente, 2012) providing a comprehensive and empirical understanding of the various dimensions and complexities associated with anti-Muslim attitudes. By engaging with experts in the field and utilizing a Delphi method, the study offers valuable insights into the conceptual frameworks that underpin Islamophobic discourse.

The findings of this study have practical implications for institutions, policymakers and media professionals, at both the European and Spanish levels. By clarifying the conceptual frameworks that contribute to Islamophobic attitudes, this research can inform the development of targeted strategies and policies to combat Islamophobia. Furthermore, this research contributes to raising social awareness about the scope and impact of Islamophobia. By shedding light on the nuances and complexities of anti-Muslim connotations, the study challenges stereotypical generalizations and contributes with empirical, analytical, and interdisciplinary approach to understanding Islamophobia.

2. Framing Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim speech

In recent years, digital platforms, particularly social media, have witnessed an unprecedented rise in toxic and hate speech (Fuentes-Lara & Arcila-Calderon, 2022; Zamora-Vicente *et al.*, 2021), that encourages polarization, intolerance, and discrimination, thereby empowering ultra-conservative groups and political parties to spread their ideas (Moreno *et al.*, 2020).

In Spain, existing reports on the portrayal of Muslims on the internet reveal a negative and stigmatized representation in online spaces (Alcántara-Plá & Ruiz-Sánchez, 2017; Ruiz-Sánchez & Alcántara-Plá, 2018). Furthermore, media narratives linked to radicalization and terrorism prevail, with stigmatization acting as a catalyst for hate speech and hate crimes (Corral *et al*., 2023; Fundación Al Fanar, 2020). Misinformation and fake news also circulate about the Muslim community reflecting a lack of understanding of internal diversity and perpetuating stereotypes (Magallón, 2020).

Despite the diverse social reality of Muslims in Spain, the discourse surrounding the Muslim community is often superficial, biased, and heavily stigmatized. In fact, the analysis of Islamophobia narratives, from a framing perspective, has been a research topic in some studies on how mainstream media portray stories linked to Islam, pointing out that Islamophobia concentrates as much on political Islamism as on discourses that subscribe to the incompatibility between Islam and democracy, or the backwardness and homogeneity of the Arab-Islamic world with respect to Western superiority (Corral, Fernández-Romero & García-Ortega, 2020).

Even when discussed historically, the Muslim population is predominantly depicted as military invaders, portraying "them" as historical enemies in Spanish territory. When they are portrayed as victims of Islamophobia-related injustices, they are framed as separate from "us", with negative portrayals of Islam dominate, frequently presenting Muslims as security threats (labeling them as terrorists, criminals, thieves, and/or rapists), economic burdens, or symbolic threats to the cultural and religious identities of Western host countries, including Spain (Alcántara-Plá & Ruiz-Sánchez, 2017).

Additionally, the Muslim community is often associated with the issue of immigration, specifically "illegal" Moroccan immigration, perpetuating the notion that all Muslims are foreign, and that Spanish Muslims do not exist. Furthermore, they are unjustly criminalized, with even unaccompanied minors subjected to Islamophobic discourse by being labeled

as "illegal" and assimilated into negative stereotypes (Observatorio de la islamofobia en los medios, 2023).

Moreover, there exists a racist element that targets individuals with physical characteristics associated with being Muslim or Arab, reflecting ethnic and cultural supremacism. This prejudice is rooted in sustained colonialism and discriminatory paternalistic behaviors, often emphasizing assumptions of machismo, oppression, submission, and misogyny within Islam (Alcántara-Plá & Ruiz-Sánchez, 2017; Garrido-Clemente, 2013).

Overall, measuring discrimination and understanding its origins is complex. Defining the line between discrimination and lack of inclusion is challenging. Anti-Muslim hate speech is characterized by its intersectionality, encompassing racism, xenophobia, religious hatred, and gender-based animosity, targeting Moroccans, North Africans, migrants, "Menas" (Moroccan migrants), hijabi women, and others. Based on the indicators provided by the Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media and previous studies on the multifaceted nature of Islamophobia, our framework seeks to identify and empirically test with expert´s opinions these intersecting imaginaries.

3. The need to propose alternative media narratives about Islam and Muslims

The responsibility to construct responsible media narratives so that their audience can understand reality from a human point of view, free from prejudice and generalizations, is crucial to reversing and blurring the current frameworks related to Islam and Muslims.

To this end, recommendations for journalists to offer professional and sensitive coverage of Islam topics, promoting intercultural dialogue and avoiding turning journalism into a weapon serving hegemonic discourse, with alternative narratives, are increasingly necessary (Peña-Miranda *et al.*, 2013; Pintak & Franklin, 2017). In fact, there are some interesting proposals from Fundación porCausa, where civil society collaborate with journalists to replace hate speech with new narratives (Carvajal *et al.*, 2019).

As one of these efforts to offer recommendations for journalists regarding the coverage of Islam and the Muslim world, the Al Fanar Foundation has recently published a guide for journalists in Spain, in collaboration with the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique (CCIB), Media Diversity Institute (MDI), NOOR Foundation; European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), and the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE). This guide seeks to provide data and recommendations for journalists to consider the conceptual frameworks —loaded with negative stereotypes— within which we unconsciously constrain Islam and Muslims (Rojo *et al.*, 2020).

Despite that most European media outlets have created specific guidelines to address issues related to minorities, it is challenging to train media professionals in new specialization, including transformative journalism, peace journalism, solutions journalism, constructive journalism, or ethical journalism (Ewart & O'Donnell, 2018).

In the constant deluge of media coverage on Islam, the typology of Muslims in the media is basically reduced to their relationship with terrorism (Alsultany, 2012): in its negative version as a terrorist, millionaire sheikh, or submissive woman, or the version of the good Muslim who fights against extremism by being a model citizen, or who has been a victim of terrorism, or the option of a woman liberated by Western values from the Islamic patriarchal yoke.

Our work aims to contribute methodologically by utilizing the Delphi method to refine a conceptual framework that captures the intersectional imaginaries prevalent in the anti-Muslim discourse. This approach builds upon existing research and will incorporate expert input, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the subject that could be also useful for media contexts.

4. Experts' opinions on Islamophobia: The Delphi Method

To empirically test our framework on Islamophobia, we engaged in a dialogue with leading professionals and academics working in the Spanish context. We utilized a Delphi-type technique, where participants interacted through a questionnaire to exchange ideas and opinions. The study had two main objectives: firstly, to validate the categories defining Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rejection in online hate speech with the help of experts, and secondly, to explore the multifaceted nature of Islamophobia by examining real-life examples and acknowledging the intersections and overlaps among different categories.

4.1. Delphi research as a prospective resource

The Delphi method was chosen as our research approach due to its suitability for data collection from geographically dispersed experts. It is a commonly used qualitative method in social science research to address complex events or problematic situations (Cabero & Infante, 2014; Ortega, 2008). This anonymous consultation procedure enabled us to gather diverse opinions and provide insights into the relatively unexplored topic of Islamophobia.

The Delphi study has been defined as "a method of structuring a group communication process that is effective in enabling a group of individuals, as a whole, to address a complex problem" (Linstone & Turoff, 2002: 56). It is typically an exploratory technique used in a poorly understood or uncertain field of study, aiming to systematically, logically, and neutrally gather all the information and judgments related to explaining an issue seen as a problem or simply to approach medium- to long-term decision-making. The Delphi method offers unique conversational characteristics compared to other group discussion techniques. It allows for anonymous and controlled feedback, offering a survey-like experience. The iterative nature of re-questioning in successive rounds minimizes misinterpretation and generates new data through continuous information distribution.

In our study, we employed a process involving a selected panel of experts who were queried individually through successive rounds of questionnaires. The flexibility of this technique allowed researchers to adapt and refine questions in line with the research

objective, while experts could modify their responses based on previous rounds, fostering collaboration, leading to their collaboration in shaping a collective discourse (Gaitán-Moya & Piñuel-Raigada, 1998). Therefore, our objective was to arrive at a reliable group opinion by engaging a diverse set of experts (Landeta, 2005).

The choice of the Delphi technique was also driven by the participation of relevant and authoritative individuals in the field of study, ensuring a representative composition and diverse perspectives to address the research problem at hand (Ruiz-Olabuénaga & Ispizua, 1989). In our study, email was used for successive rounds of communication, providing a convenient and researcher-independent process. The productive nature of this technique is also justified by the participation of certain individuals considered relevant personalities or authorities in the subject matter under investigation, in this case, related to the discourse of Islam.

For all mentioned, this research is classified as a Delphi study according to Landeta's classification criteria (2005). The research primarily sought consensus among the contributions of the expert group, adhering to the traditional guidelines of the Delphi technique. The study aimed to examine the various dimensions and complexities of this phenomenon.

4.2. Criteria for selecting experts

In any Delphi research, the selection of participating experts is crucial as the productivity of the study relies on their judgments and assessments. For this study, experts were defined as individuals with extensive practical and theoretical knowledge of the investigated phenomenon. Therefore, we included a selection of seven nationally renowned experts with professional or academic ties to Islamophobia, expertise in the subject matter and the ability to facilitate potential debates. We tried to include a diverse sample, based on gender with presence of both, academics and professionals. However, ideological positions among experts were not considered relevant in this study.

Once the group of experts was selected, they were contacted via email, which was also used to carry out the two rounds of the entire process. Their participation was voluntary and without any financial compensation. Initially, seven experts expressed interest in participating in the experiment. All seven experts provided responses in both rounds and adhered to the given deadlines.

While individual responses were not attributed to specific individuals due to the absence of associations between opinions and names, it is relevant to list the experts who have contributed to this research:

Table 1. Composition of the group of experts consulted.

Encarnación Hidalgo	Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Granada.
Ana I. Planet	Professor of Sociology of Islam and Vice-Dean of Postgraduate Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the Autonomous University of Madrid.
Sergio Gracia	Bachelor in Law from the University of Córdoba and Master's degree in Terrorism Phenomenology: Bioterrorism, Prevention, Epidemiology, Cyberterrorism, and Chemical Threats at the Faculty of Sciences in Granada.
Ghufran KhirAllah	Ph.D. in Sociolinguistics from the Autonomous University of Madrid. She also holds a diploma in Religion and Law in a democratic society: Challenges of Coexistence in a Plural Context from Zaragoza University.
Alberto López Bargados	Ph.D. in Social Anthropology and Associate Professor at the University of Barcelona. He has worked for several years in Mauritania, Western Sahara, and Cape Verde, focusing on the field of Colonial Anthropology.
Musa Bourekba	Principal Researcher at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and Associate Professor in International Relations at the Blanquerna Faculty (Ramon Llull University).
Alejandra Temprano	Graduate in Journalism from the European University Miguel de Cervantes in Valladolid. She works as Communication Department and Hate Speech Monitoring on social media at the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE).

Source: Own elaboration.

4.3. Design and establishment of the Delphi questionnaire

Following the guidelines of the Delphi technique (Landeta, 2005), a systematic process was established whose specifications are indicated in figure 1. This process included a pre-determined research design, the creation of a clear and concise questionnaire, and a logical criterion for determining the number of rounds in the study. The coordinating group decided to conduct two rounds of questionnaire administration with a one-month interval between each round. The empirical work concluded after these rounds. The first phase took place from May 2nd to May 17th, 2023, while the second phase occurred from June 2nd to June 17th, 2023. The specifications of the Delphi method can be seen in Figure 1.

To achieve a consensus result that facilitates subsequent interpretation and processing of the responses, the peculiarities of the Delphi methodology were considered when formulating the questions. Each expert was initially asked to respond to a questionnaire (refer to Appendix) consisting of five sections corresponding to the research questions:

1. Conceptual issues about Islamophobia
2. Ranking of the frameworks that define the Islamophobic narrative
3. Expansion of the frameworks that define the Islamophobic narrative
4. Identification of frameworks in specific textual examples

5. Identification of frameworks in humorous visual examples

In the first round, a mix of open-ended questions and subjective evaluation questions were used to assess the importance assigned to a series of statements by experts. The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions focused on two themes: the conceptualization of Islamophobia and the main framework for identifying this phenomenon. Real-life examples, including text-based tweets and humorous visual examples (published jokes), were provided to empirically record the experts' subjective evaluation of the main framework defining the Islamophobic narrative. In the second round, the questionnaire summarized the answers from the first round and presented a follow-up question or suggestion based on the initial contributions. This stage allowed each expert to consider and potentially revise their position on the issues after being exposed to the diversity of responses from their peers.

For this specific case, participants were required to rank the Islamophobia-related questions numerically, like the first round, and some open-ended questions were provided for participants to express their overall assessment. The individual responses were collected, compiled, and integrated, considering the frequency of appearance of each item and the ranking provided by each expert. The mode was used as the primary statistical measure to determine the importance of each ranking for the group's consensus response.

Figure 1.　Specifications of the Delphi method Specifications.

- Methodology applied. Delphi type questionnaire.
- Medium. Email.
- Universe. Researcher and Professionals in Islamophobia
- Sample size. Seven experts.
- Date of fieldwork. First round: 2-17, May 2023. Second round: 2-17, June 2023

Source: Own elaboration.

5. Results
5.1. Self-perception on Islamophobia meaning

In this initial all-encompassing response, experts agree that an Islamophobic hate message includes Muslim people in its objective, but also those who are perceived, identified, or represented as such and Islam as a religion, including symbols and institutions. Whether individuals or the religion itself (or even institutions), they are often considered monolithic entities with characteristics predetermined by religion.

They also coincided on the idea that the hate message is carried out by disqualifying, humiliating, stigmatizing, homogenizing, animalizing, foreignizing and stereotyping Muslims as irrational, fanatic, lacking the capacity for self-action, less civilized, non-intellectual. All this for Muslims, but, more acutely, the Islamophobic discourse about Muslim women includes references that take away their authority over their decisions and their autonomy.

Another feature they pointed out as an Islamophobic message is the use of Islam as an instrument of fear in political discourse, so that Islam is stigmatized as opposed to European national identity and values.

In a second round, the experts clarified certain questions regarding the orientation of the messages rather than the defined messages obtained regarding Islamophobia. Some observations were made based on previous round, ranging from total agreement with the compilation made in the first round to nuances like whether the ways considered "exercise of the hate message" present some type of gradation, for example, in one of the most accentuated cases, which would be that of "animalization".

Experts also wanted to delve into the way in which Islamophobic discourse usually refers to the invasion and attack of European identity, where the celebration of Islamic religious events is seen as an affront to national and European identity.

Furthermore, as another hint, they indicated that there is a difference between a generalized discourse of an Islamophobic perception and an Islamophobic discourse that is made to men and women (differentiated and differentiating). According to these nuances, Muslim woman would be portrayed as submissive and lacking autonomy and the Muslim man, as overflowing with authority and hyperactive, culminating in the repeated representation of a "jihadist terrorist". In fact, some experts also established a difference between an Islamophobic discourse that is more pressing on women and what is happening is that a structural difference is established between women and men.

Finally, they pointed out how civil and constitutional rights have been subtracted from European Muslims. A clear example is that Muslim women are not identified as holders of rights in the educational field when they are prohibited from wearing the hijab. Another case would be the contrast of the Muslim as the "other" when constructing the "we" or the collective identity. These frames are disseminated by an irrational generic Western political and media discourse, which presents Islam and all Muslims as potential enemies and proclaims the incompatibility of Islam with European values. Experts underlined the rapid increase in the Muslim population in Europe as the fact to be used in the construction of that enemy. At the same time, in their opinion, the efforts of European Muslim communities to build a Euro-Muslim identity and resist full assimilation into European culture have been marked as disloyal and a threat to European identity.

5.2. Conceptual issues about Islamophobia

Experts expressed significant agreement regarding various conceptual issues related to Islamophobia. One notable concern is the rise of political and institutional Islamophobia, perpetrated by representatives from diverse ideological political parties. Additionally, the experts deemed the violence directed towards racialized or culturally racialized women as a pivotal aspect of structural violence, further reinforced and legitimized by both the racist and patriarchal systems.

There was a consensus that immigrant status holds greater explanatory power than cultural factors in understanding Islamophobia, and that rejection of certain societal sectors is often determined by physical appearance. However, experts displayed less agreement when it came to acknowledging identity-related aspects, such as the perception that Islamophobia discriminates against individuals racially perceived as Muslim.

During the second phase, experts stressed the importance of taking an intersectional view, considering how different dimensions interact. They emphasized that, in acts of discrimination like Islamophobia, multiple factors come into play, including religious belief, sexual orientation, gender, skin color, and ethnicity. The experts clarified that discrimination can be based on clothing or religious belief, without necessarily inciting hatred towards those individuals, which is a more specific intensity of discrimination. Furthermore, they agreed that Islamophobia should not always involve an attack on faith; any traditions, culture, or differences such as language could also be viewed as threatening.

Lastly, most experts agreed on differentiating levels of Islamophobia. The first level encompasses the fundamental theoretical foundation that forms the basis for original Islamophobic practices, involving the creation of otherness and the presentation of Islam as incompatible with Western values. The second level refers to Islamophobic behavior, both conscious and unconscious, practiced by communities in response to Islamophobic public and media discourse or in reaction to identifying perceived Muslim attributes, whether based on racial characteristics or religious visibility.

5.3. Hierarchization of the frames that define the Islamophobic narrative

In the context of hierarchizing the frames that define the Islamophobic narrative, experts recognize the following as the most predominant categories: the frame depicting Muslims as potential jihadist terrorists (terrorism), followed by the portrayal of Muslim women as oppressed, victimized, and/or submissive due to the Islamic veil (gender discrimination). The next frames identify Muslims as violent individuals often associated with criminal acts, insecurity, and societal danger (crime), and as invaders altering the demographics of Western countries (invasion).

With relatively less importance, other identified frames include the notion that Muslims are hated and rejected simply for being Muslims, without any identifiable reason or argument (irrational hate). There are also frames that depict Muslims as illegal or undocumented, in an irregular situation (illegality), or as threats to Western religious, cultural, racial, or lineage identity (symbolic threat and Western supremacism). Additionally, the frames portraying Muslims as poor, marginalized, lower class, and being rejected based on these characteristics (classism-aporophobia), or as a socioeconomic burden on the receiving society (dependency on aid, social benefits, job competition) (socioeconomic burden) are present to a lesser extent.

During a second round of discussions, experts confirmed the relevance of these categories for consolidating the Islamophobic discourse. They made some noteworthy observations, including the complementarity of these categories in many cases, the categorization being influenced by a specific social positioning that is excessively classist, and the suggestion to consider geographical and ideological issues in the categorization.

However, some experts raised concerns about certain categories or the overall assessment of the study. For example, one expert argued that calling hatred irrational is contradictory, as hatred is inherently irrational. Another noted that the socioeconomic burden narrative is often pushed by groups feeling their privilege threatened by support for Muslims. An expert was also surprised by the low significance given to aporophobia, arguing that actions against the poor differ from those against wealthier individuals.

5.4. Expansion of Islamophobic narrative framework

Regarding a possible expansion of the framework that defines Islamophobia, experts reached a consensus that our typology is valid, although not entirely exclusive. In fact, they pointed out some observations that could be partly included in the proposed frameworks. For instance, the perception of Muslims as a sexual threat to women in the West, or the idea that Muslims are seen as misfits, which aligns with our delinquency frame. Additionally, there is the perception that Muslims are identified as religious individuals ("fanatics") in a world dominated by secular principles, which can be incorporated into our symbolic threat frame.

In a second round, experts provided their assessments of this expansion. In general, they confirmed the proposed typology, though with some observations. Some experts disagreed with placing the consideration of Muslims as "fanatical" religious individuals within the symbolic threat framework, arguing that secular principles influence not only the symbolic realm but also the broader political and economic order. Furthermore, in relation to the idea that Muslims are perceived as a sexual threat to women in the West or as misfits, considerations were raised regarding the gender epistemological differences between the Western-secular framework and the Islamic framework. Specifically, it was noted that Western gender and feminism ideologies aim for gender equality by stigmatizing any differences between men and women as negative. Islamophobic discourse exploits Islamic concepts to depict differences as discriminatory and sexist. For instance, Muslims who maintain non-feminized masculine traits are labeled as aggressive, while women who wear the hijab and don't conform to Western dress norms are considered criminals. Similarly, those who have more than one child and care for them are seen as not conforming to (post)modernity norms.

Finally, it was also pointed out that there is a group in which all the frameworks converge: the MENAS. Most unaccompanied minors are of North African origin and are targeted when acts of violence occur, being portrayed as violent, threats to society, or misfits.

5.5. Identification of frames in specific examples

In general, a high degree of agreement was evident among all participating experts when identifying

the predominant frame in a tweet. One of the most frequently recurring and agreeable frames for the experts to reach a consensus on was the gender discrimination frame, particularly when tweets specifically mentioned Muslim women or their identity traits, such as the veil. However, sometimes the gender frame coincided with the race-ethnic discrimination frame, leading to greater disagreement among experts (see example 11).

To further explore situations in which both frameworks could be present, a second round of examples was provided to the experts to clarify the reasons for choosing each frame. Many experts recalled the difficulty of choosing between the two, as these categories were often complementary, reflecting the intersectionality of the phenomenon. No common pattern emerged among experts when making their judgments. Some opted for the race-ethnic framework when tweets employed a totalizing construction emphasizing ethnocentrism and the superiority of one race over another. When choosing the gender frame, it was justified by direct references to Muslim women based on their origin and/or religion.

Another framework that posed no difficulties in detection was the one identifying Muslims as an economic burden for the country and society. Its presence was unmistakable and rarely raised any doubts. One of the most contentious situations occurred when the illegality frame predominated in examples due to the lack of legal documentation or irregular immigration status. Some experts also observed the crime frame in these cases, suggesting a direct connection because of the situation (example 6). Experts struggled to choose one framework over the other. The argument that a cause-consequence relationship often existed between both frameworks seemed to hold, following a certain argumentative structure. The situation of administrative illegality frequently led to the emergence of the crime frame. Similar difficulties were encountered with the invasion frame, which was prominent in nearly all examples. When a Muslim person was linked to an invader, they were immediately labeled as dangerous and associated with terrorism, leading to the pairing of both frames (example 3).

In this case, a second round was necessary to clarify the situations in which both frameworks coexisted. Unlike other cases, there was greater agreement among experts in recognizing that the invasion frame seemed to predominate in the examples based on the choice of words, although terrorism was considered a consequence of the invasion, defining the type of subjects deemed invaders. Specific allusions, such as "Holy War" and "Jihad," played a crucial role in identifying this frame.

Finally, it is worth noting the associations established around the framework linked to discrimination by race/ethnicity. In this context, significant connections were found with the frame of irrational hate and discrimination based on classism and aporophobia.

5.6. Identification of frames in visual examples of humorous tone

Overall, experts unanimously recognized all the presented examples as instances of Islamophobic speech, particularly when considering visual elements.

Interestingly, the framework of terrorism was the most common theme in this genre of jokes, consistently featuring Muslims as protagonists. From a symbolic perspective, these jokes often caricatured Muslims using stereotypical images associated with them in society. This included depictions with turbans, specific clothing, beards, aquiline noses, dark complexions, and more.

When it came to visually representing Muslim women, a similar pattern emerged. They were frequently portrayed wearing the burqa and placed in submissive positions in relation to their husbands, sometimes reduced to objects rather than individuals. These caricatures frequently carried political and religious connotations related to Islam, including allusions to promised virgins, the Caliphate, and other themes. However, without a doubt, the predominant theme in this type of humor consistently revolved around terrorist violence associated with Muslims. Notable examples included the depiction of shirt bombs, massacres of innocents, and a constant presence of weapons.

6. Conclusions

This study presents a fresh and innovative approach to comprehending Islamophobia as a multifaceted social issue. By adopting a more empirical, analytical, and interdisciplinary perspective, the research aimed to fill gaps in existing literature. Employing a two-round Delphi method involving seven experts in the Spanish context, the study sought to delineate the framework of Islamophobia within online hate speech and uncover the multiple dimensions and complexities of anti-Muslim bias.

The study's findings unveiled a substantial level of agreement among the experts on certain conceptual aspects of Islamophobia. However, distinctions were made between a general discourse of Islamophobic perception and a discourse targeting men and women specifically. The experts also stressed the multifaceted nature of anti-Muslim speech, recognizing that it incorporates not only religious factors but also considerations such as sexual orientation, gender, skin color, and ethnicity. While these categories were acknowledged as relevant for defining Islamophobic discourse, they were also seen as complementary to each other.

Moreover, when examining real cases (tweets) to identify these categories or frames, a high level of consensus was observed among the experts, except for three conflict situations that presented challenges related to discrimination: gender versus race-ethnic frame, illegality versus crime frame, and invasion versus terrorism frame. These complexities highlight the intricate nature of Islamophobia and the need for nuanced analysis when addressing this issue.

Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on Islamophobia by providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The findings underscore the importance of considering multiple factors and perspectives when examining anti-Muslim bias and emphasize the need for continued research and dialogue to effectively combat Islamophobia. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach and engaging with experts in the field, this study offers valuable insights that can inform

future efforts to address the impact of Islamophobia in society and offer relevant clues to change media narratives about this public issue.

By using experts´ opinions, we have contributed to refine a conceptual framework that captures the intersectional imaginaries prevalent in the anti-Muslim discourse. Our findings on framing Islamophobia confirm the stigmatization of this minority (Alcántara-Plá & Ruiz-Sánchez, 2017) and the lack of information about the intrinsic diversity of the Muslim community (Magallón, 2020). Our reflections can also connect with some previous studies that underlined the importance of the culturalist perspective of framing, to identify frames (discourses, stereotypes, etc.) and to recognize that the origin of those frames affects cultural and religious criteria, rather than historical or political motives (Corral, Fernández-Romero & García-Ortega, 2020).

In conclusion, while this study provides valuable insights into the understanding of Islamophobia within online hate speech, it is essential to address the limitations and consider them as opportunities for future research. Firstly, the sample size of experts involved in the Delphi research was based on seven individuals from the Spanish context. While their expertise provided valuable perspectives, the findings may not fully encompass the diversity of opinions and experiences related to Islamophobia. Future research could benefit from expanding the sample size and including experts from different cultural, geographical, and disciplinary backgrounds to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Furthermore, the study primarily focused on the Spanish context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and national contexts. It would be valuable for future research to conduct comparative studies across different countries to examine the similarities and differences in the conceptualization and manifestation of Islamophobia, that is more and more a global problem.

7. Funding and support

8. Authors' contributions

Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims.	Authors 1, 2 y 3
Data curacition	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later re-use.	Authors 1 y 2
Formal analysis	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyse or synthesize study data.	Authors 1 y 3
Funding acquisition	Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication.	Authors 1 y 2
Investigation	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection.	Authors 1, 2, 3
Methodology	Development or design of methodology; creation of models.	Authors 1, 2, 3
Project administration	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution.	Author 2
Resources	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools.	Authors 1, 2, 3
Software	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components.	Authors 1 y 2
Supervision	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team.	Authors 1 y 2
Validation	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs.	Authors 1, 2, 3
Visualization	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/data presentation.	Authors 1, 2, 3
Writing / original draft	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation).	Authors 1, 2, 3
Writing / review & editing	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre- or post-publication stages.	Authors 1, 2, 3

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Appendix: Delphi questionnaire

1. Define in your own words what you understand as an Islamophobic hate message.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Indicate the key words that, in your opinion, can define "Muslim" and that are not in this list

islam islamic islamic islamic islamic muslim muslims islamism islamist islamists islamophobe islamophobia mosque veil scarf burqa burqa hijab hijab niqab nikab moro moroccan moroccan algerian algerian algerian algerian muhammad mohammed mohamed halal ramadan allah ala alah sharia koran sunni sunni sunni sunni sunni shii shiis chies shiite shiites

3. Indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements (0 being not at all agree and 5 being strongly agree)

– *Islamophobia must always include an attack against Islam in terms of faith.*
– *Islamophobia must always include an attack on Muslims as people.*
– *Islamophobia is the discrimination of people who are racially perceived as Muslim.*
– *The rejection of certain sectors of society is due to their physical appearance.*
– *The rejection of certain sectors of society is given by the weight of their portfolio.*
– *There has been an uptick in political and institutional Islamophobia carried out by representatives of political parties of different ideologies.*
– *The violence exerted against racialized or culturally racialized women is structural violence, reinforced and legitimized by both the racist system and the patriarchal system.*
– *Immigrant status is more decisive than cultural issues in explaining Islamophobia.*

4. Below, we offer you a list of ten possible frameworks with which Islamophobia in society is usually characterized. We would like you to order these frames from 1-10 (1 being the least predominant and 10 the most predominant) based on the frequency of appearance you consider them to have in social conversation.

– Muslims are identified as a socioeconomic burden for the receiving society (they take advantage of aid, social benefits, occupy jobs of native citizens...) (SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN)
– Muslims are represented as violent people who are usually linked to criminal acts, insecurity, and danger to society (CRIME)
– Muslims are identified as potential jihadist terrorists (TERRORISM)
– Muslims are represented as invaders who are changing the demographics of Western countries (INVA-SION)
– Muslims are characterized as illegal, undocumented, who are in an irregular situation (ILLEGALITY)
– Muslims are represented as a threat to Western religious and cultural identity, as well as to Catholic values and principles (SYMBOLIC THREAT)
– Muslim women are identified as oppressed, victimized and/or submissive women (Islamic veil) (GENDER DISCRIMINATION)
– Muslims are represented as a threat to our race or lineage (Western supremacism) (RACE-ETHNICITY DISCRIMINATION)
– Muslims are identified as poor, marginalized and lower class and are rejected for this (DISCRIMINATION DUE TO CLASSISM-APOROPHOBIA)
– Muslims are explicitly hated and rejected simply for being Muslims, without identifiable reason or argument (IRRATIONAL HATE)

5. Do you think it would be appropriate to add another framework to this list to define Islamophobia?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Below, you will read some examples of real Islamophobic messages taken from social networks. We would like you to indicate if you identify one or more of the previous frames in each of the texts, and if so, to what degree of predominance (on a scale of 0 to 5, in which 0 is "not at all predominant" and 5 is "very predominant").

Example 1:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"In some cases, they are more fanatical... I would shoot them all, but since people are a bit picky, they should take their veil off every time they go out on the street or in the dungeon."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 2:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"No matter what this little piece of land is called, you will continue to be second-class citizens. Shitty Moors who must go to their fucking country. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the show."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 3:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"You and that Macron, you are participants in letting Western Europe in, all that terrorist, jihadist and radical rabble. Your call effect only brings deaths, insecurity and violence."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 4:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"The shitty Moor killed by the French police. I hope they put a black pudding up his ass next."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 5:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"Moors menas receiving more aid from the government than the vast majority of families, who need soup kitchens, but hey, the government gives the money to the menas."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 6:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"What a shitty law we have that cannot put these menas, mostly Moors, without papers and on top of that criminals, at the border. We have no defense and we are digging our grave with our stupid laws based on misinterpreted human rights, freedom and democracy."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 7:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"This Fatima is an oppressed, coward who doesn't have the guts to take off her fucking scarf and do it in Morocco. Coward."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 8:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"You go to other pools and there are only Moors, *panchitos...* inferior races, you understand what I mean."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 9:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"Aren't they Moroccans? Well, instead of being here consuming our limited public resources, having them returned to Morocco, if they do not remember who their parents are, having Moroccan social services take care of them, is the most logical thing."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 10:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"The Islamic veil is always a woman's submission to force, if it were voluntary, it would be cultural."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 11:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"And it is better to be white with respect, than a shitty person like you, you demand respect, and you are the ones who do not respect. I hope they throw out of Spain all the Moors and Moors who are like you without respect and who come here to fuck around, and I say Moors, but this goes for everyone."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 12:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"The European Union are a bunch of hypocritical communists who are going to lead Europe into darkness by allowing the Islamic invasion. It is an invasion consented to by our political leaders. Islamization for all."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 13:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"A young Moroccan Muslim and certainly illegal. "This is the Spain of progress."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

Example 14:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)
"Hussain is a shitty Moor who arrived on a boat two weeks ago along with other shitty Moors. Why don't we let them drown in the Mediterranean? Who knows..."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	
Example 15:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**
"Sons of bitches, shitty moors, abusers, rapists and thieves, to the Mediterranean with them."	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN	
	DELINQUENCY	
	TERRORISM	
	INVASION	
	ILLEGALITY	
	SYMBOLIC THREAT	
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY	
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA	
	IRRATIONAL HATE	
	* OTHER:	

7.   Finally, we are going to show you some graphic examples in the form of jokes that include characters from the Muslim world as protagonists. We would like you to answer three questions:

a) **whether or not you consider it an Islamophobic message**
b) **the category or categories that you believe are present in said message (as mentioned above) as well as the degree of intensity with which each of them appear**
c) **the symbolic resources identified in the images to characterize the Muslim world**

Example 1:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)	Symbolic resources
La camisa del terrorista ¿Islamophobic? 1. Yes 2. No	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN		
	DELINQUENCY		
	TERRORISM		
	INVASION		
	ILLEGALITY		
	SYMBOLIC THREAT		
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION		
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY		
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA		
	IRRATIONAL HATE		
	* OTHER:		

Example 2:	Categories:	Intensive level (0-5)	Symbolic resources
¿Islamophobic? 1. Yes 2. No	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN		
	DELINQUENCY		
	TERRORISM		
	INVASION		
	ILLEGALITY		
	SYMBOLIC THREAT		
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION		
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY		
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA		
	IRRATIONAL HATE		
	* OTHER:		
Example 3:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**	**Symbolic resources**
¿Islamophobic? 1. Yes 2. No	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN		
	DELINQUENCY		
	TERRORISM		
	INVASION		
	ILLEGALITY		
	SYMBOLIC THREAT		
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION		
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY		
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA		
	IRRATIONAL HATE		
	* OTHER:		
Example 4:	**Categories:**	**Intensive level (0-5)**	**Symbolic resources**
¿Islamophobic? 1. Yes 2. No	SOCIOECONOMIC BURDEN		
	DELINQUENCY		
	TERRORISM		
	INVASION		
	ILLEGALITY		
	SYMBOLIC THREAT		
	GENDER DISCRIMINATION		
	DISCRIMINATION BY RACE-ETHNICITY		
	DISCRIMINATION BY CLASISM-APOROPHOBIA		
	IRRATIONAL HATE		
	* OTHER:		