

# Muslims’ Evaluation of and Reaction to Discriminatory Events

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to examine the psychological consequences of religiously and racially based discrimination in Muslims. The research sought, specifically, to answer the following four questions: 1) How do Muslims *appraise* being discriminated against? 2) How do Muslims *feel* about being discriminated against? 3) Do experiences of discrimination lead to psychological rumination (thinking repetitively about a negative event)? 4) Does the participant’s gender influence the appraisals, feelings, and psychological rumination about the discriminatory event? Seventy-four Muslims filled in a questionnaire in which they were asked to answer some questions about a recent event in which they felt disrespected as Muslims. Factor analysis, reliability tests, and analyses of variance were run on the scales that measured appraisals, feelings, and cognitive rumination. The data showed that British Muslims experience a range of fairly intense emotional responses, and are moderately impacted by the event. In general, participant’s gender was not found to be a significant factor.

## REFERENCES

Horowitz, M. J., Wilner, N., & Alvarez, W. (1979). Impact of Event Scale: A study of subjective stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 41, 209-218.  
Rodriguez Mosquera, P. M. (2009). Emotional responses to group discrimination. Manuscript in preparation.

## METHOD

Seventy four Muslims (35 men and 38 women) filled in a questionnaire on a recent situation in which they felt disrespected as Muslims. The data was collected in the UK and Denmark. Participants filled in the questionnaire individually. There were two versions of the questionnaire: an English version and a Danish version. The questionnaire was constructed in English and translated into Danish. A process of back-translation was carried out. This process ensured the linguistic equivalence of all the measures. No differences in responses to discrimination were found between the Muslims living in Denmark or the Muslims living in the UK. Thus, the two linguistic groups are considered one group.

## MEASURES

Participants were asked to recall a time in which they felt disrespected and to answer some questions about this event. The measures of appraisals and feelings were developed in a previous study on the psychological experience of discrimination (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2009). Three basic appraisals (i.e., cognitive evaluations) were measured and responses were given on 7-point scales: how much the participant thought he/she was being appreciated by the person who disrespected him or her (1=very appreciated, 7=very unappreciated); how much the participant thought the event (i.e., the disrespectful treatment by another because the participants was Muslim) was unfair (1=very fair, 7=very unfair); how pleasant/unpleasant was the event for the participant (1=very pleasant, 7=very unpleasant).

Emotional feelings were measured by asking participants how intensely (1= not at all, 7 = very much) they felt the following emotions about the event: Irritated, Vulnerable, Outraged, Happy, Offended, Hurt, Humiliated, Insecure, Embarrassed, Exposed, Hurt Pride, Rejected, Powerless, Angry, Disliked, Betrayed, Inferior, Sad, Wounded Honor, Scared, Relaxed, Threatened, Distressed, Upset, Ashamed.

Cognitive rumination was measured by the Impact Event Scale (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, W. (1979). Rumination is a cognitive process associated with depression and anxiety. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently a series of statements is true for them, for example, “I still think about what happened to me when I don’t mean to,” or “I still have pictures about what happened popping into my head.” Participants could answer these statements on 7-point scales from 1=not at all to 7=very often.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

### Appraisals

An analysis of variance with gender as the independent factor and the three appraisals as dependent measures was carried out. The Multivariate effect of gender was not significant;  $F(3, 66)=1.38$ ,  $p=.26$ . As it can be seen in Chart 1, participants felt that their experiences of discrimination were very unpleasant, very unfair, and they felt very unappreciated by the disrespectful person.

### Intensity of Feelings

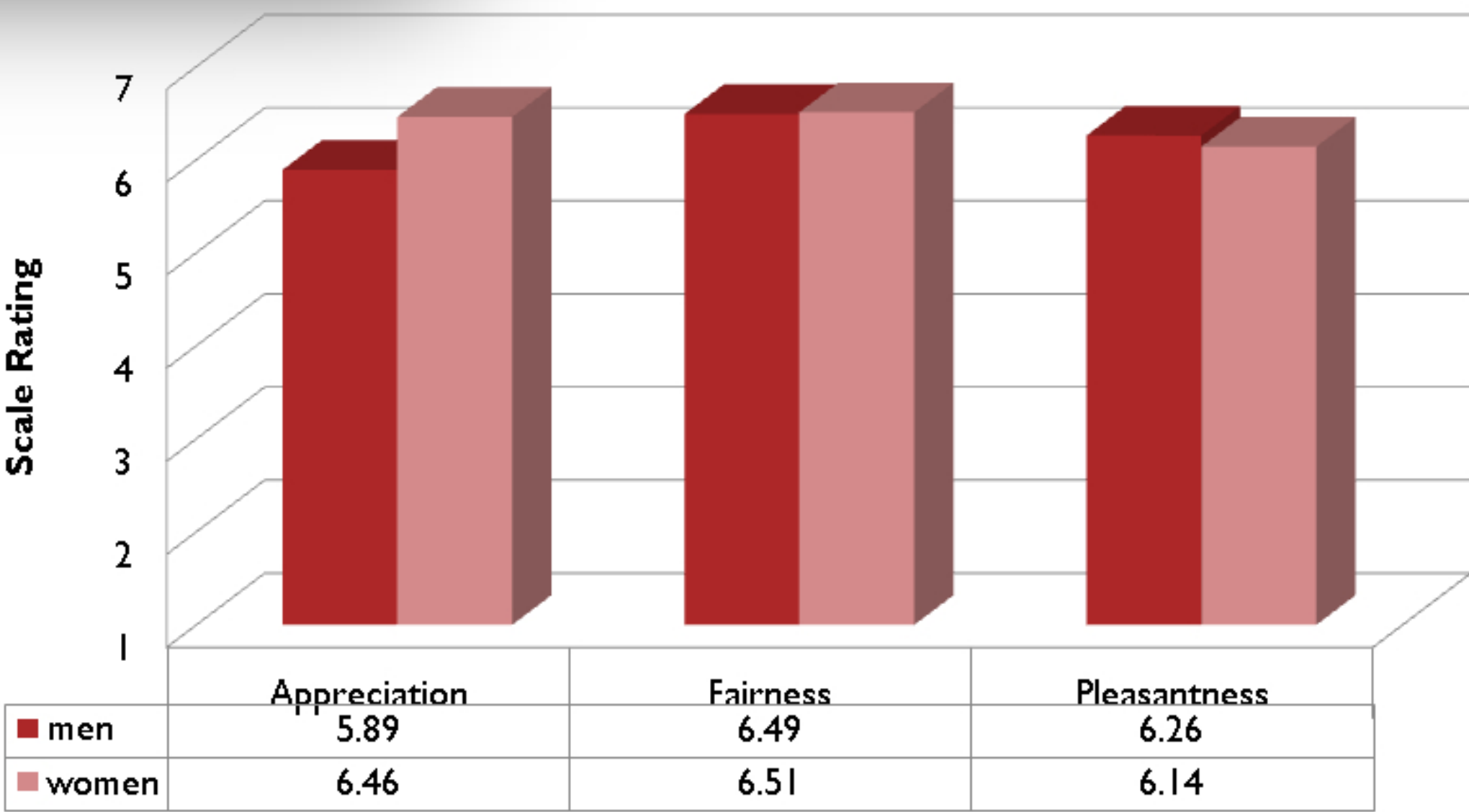
A factor analysis was first carried out to investigate the structure of the emotional feelings scale. Six factors emerged from this factor. Those emotional feelings that had loadings equal to or higher than .40 were considered to be part of one factor. The table below shows the composition of the six factors. As it can be seen in the table, the standardized alpha’s for all factors ranged between .71 and .84. This means that the emotional factors had good internal consistency. The items of happy, hurt pride, and relaxed created their own single factor. Variables that were excluded in further analyses due to poor loading included: offended, humiliated, powerless, disliked, inferior, sad, wounded honor, threatened, upset, and ashamed.

New variables were created on the basis of the factor analyses. Thus, a new rejection variable was created. This variable was the average of the emotional feelings that loaded onto this factor, i.e. vulnerable, rejected, betrayed. The same procedure was followed to created the new variables embarrassment, anger, and fear. A multivariate analysis of variance with gender as the independent factor and rejection, embarrassment, anger, fear, happiness, hurt pride, and relaxed as dependent variables were carried out. The multivariate effect of gender on intensity of emotion was not significant;  $F(7, 56)=1.14$ ,  $p=.35$ . As can be seen in the chart below, the emotions that were experienced most intensely fell into the Anger factor, followed by Hurt Pride, and then Rejection, while the emotion that was experienced least intensely was, unsurprisingly, happiness.

### Impact Event Scale: Rumination

A Factor Analysis showed that the level of impact can be measured using one factor, with an internal consistency of  $\alpha=.875$ . This result is in line with the structure of the scale found in other studies (see e.g., Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1979). A new rumination variable was created that was the average score of all items of the impact event scale. An analysis of variance with gender as the independent factor and the new rumination variable as the dependent variable was carried out. The effect of gender was significant;  $F(1, 70)=4.196$ ,  $p<.05$ . The rumination displayed in men was shown to be much stronger than that of women.

## Basic Appraisals



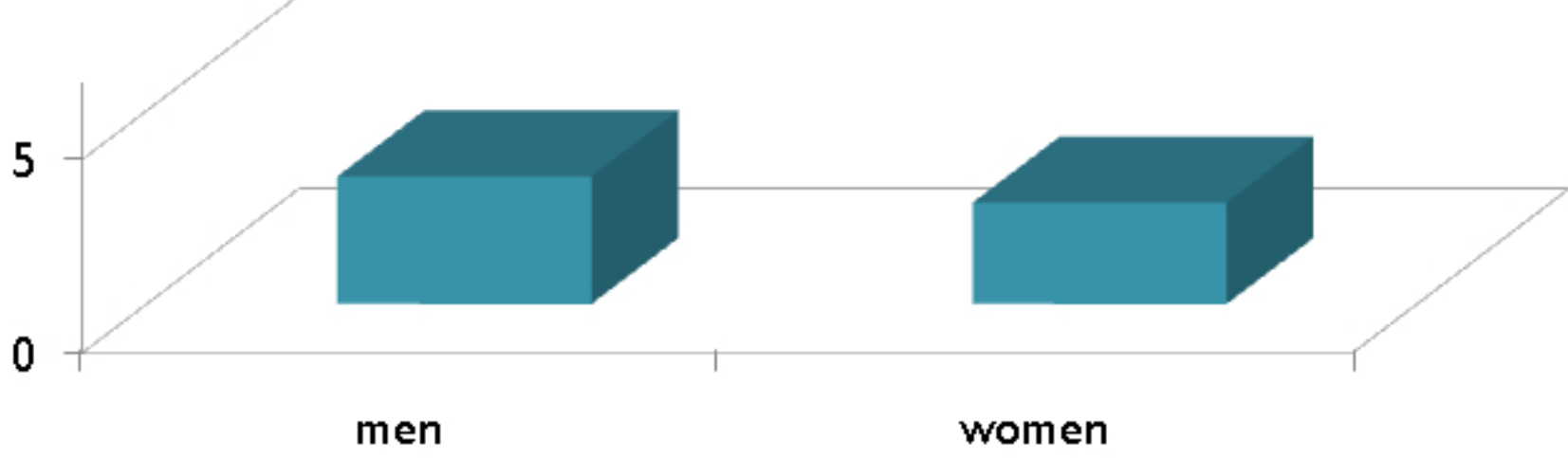
Rejection $\alpha=.763$	Embarrassment $\alpha=.714$	Anger $\alpha=.836$	Fear $\alpha=.742$	Happiness	Hurt Pride	Relaxedness
Vulnerable	Insecure	Irritated	Scared	Happy	Hurt Pride	Relaxed
Rejected	Embarrassed	Outraged	Distressed	-	-	-
Betrayed	Exposed	Hurt	-	-	-	-
-	-	Angry	-	-	-	-

## Emotional Intensity



Please indicate how frequently each of these comments is true for you. I still...	Mean
...think about what happened to me when I don't mean to.	3.21
...try to remove what happened to me from my memory.	3.52
...have waves of strong feelings about what happened.	3.57
...try not to talk about what happened to me.	3.06
... have pictures about what happened popping into my head.	2.94
...try not to think about what happened.	3.17
...have dreams about what happened.	1.62
...try to stay away from reminders of what happened.	2.72

## Rumination Factor



## CONCLUSIONS

Muslim women and men experienced disrespectful treatment on the basis of their religious group membership as a negative emotional experience. This is indicated by the intensity of negative appraisals associated with the disrespectful treatment. Participants evaluated the disrespectful treatment as very unfair, very unpleasant and as a strong indication that the other person did not appreciate them. Moreover, participants felt intense negative emotion in response to the disrespectful treatment. The most intensely experienced negative emotions were anger-related. Finally, the disrespectful treatment was psychologically meaningful for participants as they still kept ruminating about what happened to them. It is particularly interesting that men ruminated more than women about the disrespectful treatment they experienced. Future research should examine the factors that account for this gender difference.