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Experience of Cyberbullying in Social Media among Polish Muslim Women

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that every regular Internet user has encountered directly or indirectly. One definition defines it as the use of information technologies for conscious, repeated, and hostile behaviour of a person or group of people towards another person or group of people (Wojtasik 2004: 2). Another term is cyberbullying, or harassment or bullying on the Internet. The most common forms of cyberbullying include verbal aggression, e.g., posting comments on discussion groups to ridicule, upset or scare another person, publishing humiliating, edited photos and videos of someone, posting unpleasant comments on other people's profiles on social networking sites, as well as hacking into an account and impersonating someone, or blackmailing. It also includes excluding someone from the group of "friends" on social networking sites or deliberately ignoring someone's online activity (Borkowska 2023: 7). Cyberbullying has been the subject of attention of the Sejm (Groszkowska 2022: 1–4) and many social sciences researchers, including pedagogy and media studies. However, the bulk of attention is taken by analyses devoted to this phenomenon in relation to children or youth (Wojtasik 2004; Grajek et al. 2013; Wójcik 2017; Borkowska 2019; Klimek-Łakomy 2023, etc.).

Slightly less attention is paid to this issue in relation to adults and especially in relation to minorities, who often become objects of attacks in both the virtual and real world. The motive of the perpetrators' actions is broadly understood difference, which in Poland is treated as a threat that should be combated and not as an interesting phenomenon that one could get

to know. According to research conducted by the Hofstede Institute, Polish society is characterised by one of the highest rates of Anxiety Avoidance. Poland reaches 93 points on a 100-point scale, which means that in this society, any difference is considered a threat (Global Report 2024). However, what is different does not necessarily have to be treated from the defensive or imperial position as something worse, which should be forced to assimilate. An alternative possibility is an intercultural perspective, in which the difference takes on its cognitive value and becomes a mirror in which what is native and familiar can be reviewed, noticing one's own resources and shortcomings (Lisowska-Magdziarz 2018: 49). On the other hand, the element that makes it difficult to build such an open perspective is the still strongly held idea of Polish society as an ethnically and culturally homogeneous entity, which is reflected in both political activities (or their absence) and social practices (Zamojska 2013: 194). In this rather narrowly understood concept, there is no space for those groups that try to enlarge, redefine or question that traditional concept and their cultural, ethnic or religious richness is consequently pushed to the margins of social discourse. Nevertheless, they are looking for alternative spaces for development and opportunities to speak with their own voice, finding it in the virtual world, where they also encounter attacks. One of the groups that is particularly exposed to online violence is Polish Muslim women, who cause many problems for defenders of traditionally understood national identity. Due to their origin, cultural experience and language, they could be classified as a familiar element. However, their chosen religion makes betrayers even more dangerous from a genuine foreign factor. This situation is also influenced by the negative perception of Islam in Polish society, which in turn is partly a consequence of the hostility towards difference. According to a CBOS report from 2019, Poles have the least sympathy for followers of this religion. However, it is worth adding that the temperature of feelings changes to warmer in those among the respondents who have established personal relationships with representatives of Islam.

The author of the article has become interested in the issue of cyberbullying in the context of Muslim women for several reasons. Firstly, she has been conducting netnographic research devoted to developing the discourse of Polish Muslim women for two years. On this basis, she noticed shared beliefs in groups of Muslim women about the inevitability of violence and Poland as a country exceptionally hostile to Muslims. However, she also observed significant Muslim women's activity on social media. The initial content analysis of selected profiles showed that the issue of attacks from other internet users, which the authors experience, is a common theme of their content, mainly on TikTok. Moreover, the lecture on commentaries allowed her to notice that they contain expressions bearing the characteristics of verbal violence. It should also be added that the author herself is a Muslim. However,

she does not directly experience violence on social media, as she consciously limits her activity almost exclusively to conducting scientific observations on the above-mentioned topic.

The observed phenomenon allowed her to formulate a research hypothesis: Polish Muslim women who are active on social media outside their own circle are exposed to cyberbullying due to their religion. To verify it, the author asked the following research questions: Do Polish Muslim women consider themselves to be a group particularly affected by the problem of cyberbullying? Does this experience affect their activities on social media (and beyond)? To what extent is the cyberbullying they experience related to their religion, and is it correlated with phenomena that they themselves have no influence over? The author also wanted to learn about the opinions and ideas of Muslim women on how to reduce the scale of violence. The research methods she used to find answers were a diagnostic survey in the form of an online questionnaire (Pilch 2010: 96) and an in-depth interview (Pilch 2010: 91). Verifying the obtained research results, the author also referred to the results of her own observations conducted using the netnographic method (Kozinets 2015: 79). The methodological framework that unites this study and the entire project is Critical Discourse Analysis, which allows for conducting research in the field of social sciences to propose the desired change (Van Dijk 2001: 9–44). Briefly discussing the selected research methods: the diagnostic survey method with purposeful sampling was chosen to reach a relatively wide group of geographically dispersed recipients characterised by high distrust. Muslim women feel rejected in society; some are forced to hide their religious affiliation, for example, for fear of losing their jobs.

An anonymous survey seemed a comfortable way for the respondents to express their views on an important topic while maintaining a sense of security. Since the author wanted to eliminate accidental answers, she distributed the survey only via communication channels, such as Messenger or WhatsApp, dedicated to Muslim women. Only this method gave almost certainty that the questionnaire would reach the study group. The survey was available for about a week, was completed by 33 people, and consisted of six questions: five closed and one open. Then, the author considered that the survey alone would not be enough to get to know the phenomenon in more detail, so the in-depth interview method was chosen to expand on the responses obtained in the survey. Five respondents were invited to the interviews, of whom three agreed. The criterion for invitations was to obtain the broadest possible spectrum of statements in terms of age and style of activity in social media, which was achieved because each respondent had represented a different communication style. The developed scenario contained eight questions, the first of which, introductory, concerned online activities. Questions from the second to the seventh were devoted to various aspects of cyberbullying, and

the last to the ideas and opinions of the respondents on the subject of possibilities of change. The data collection process itself provided interesting observations. Some community members positively accepted the author's research intention, considering it important for destigmatising the group. They also got involved in forwarding the survey and agreed to participate in interviews. However, some decided it was not worth the effort because it would not have any effect. It should be added that the biography of the author, a practising Muslim herself, helped increase interest in participating in the study. It was considered the factor that increased the probability that the study results would not be used against the group.

Research Data Analysis

The first task, the question: "Are you a Muslim?" was testing and selective. 32 people confirmed and one denied, but the same person declared in an open question that she was "closer to Islam than Christianity." Chart 1 illustrates the answers.
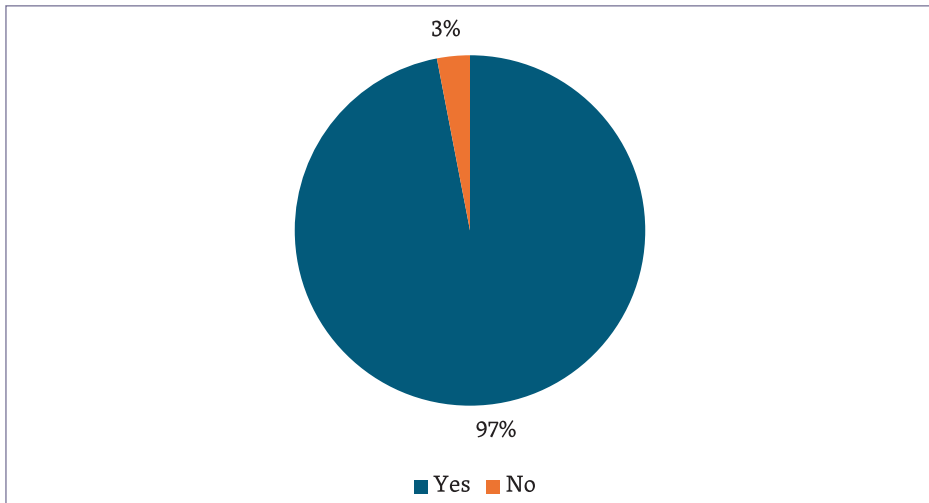

Chart 1. Are you a Muslim?

In the second question, the author wanted to find out whether the respondents had ever experienced online violence as Muslims. As can be seen in chart 2, 27 respondents admitted that they had experienced online violence as Muslims, with the most significant number, 13 (39.4%), declaring that it was aggression directed at both them and another Muslim woman, 9 (27.3%)

admitted that it was aggression directed directly at them and 5 (15.2%) stated that it was aggression directed at another Muslim woman. 5 (15.2%) of the respondents admitted that they had not experienced online violence as Muslims, and 1 stated that she did not remember whether such an event had taken place.
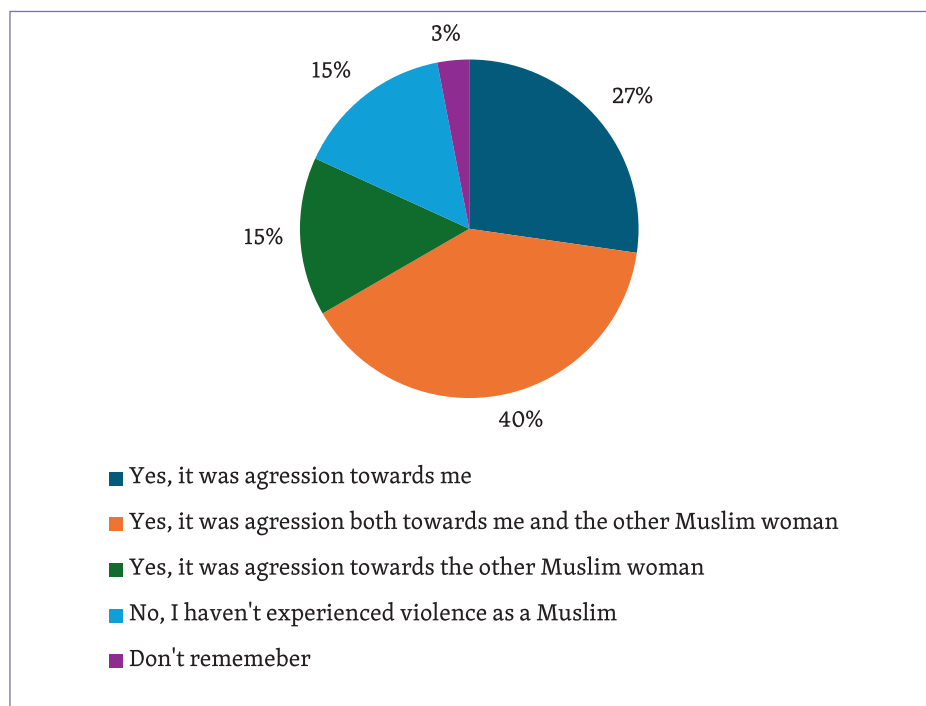

Chart 2. Have you experienced cyberbullying as a Muslim?

In the third question, the author wanted to find out what kind of cyberbullying the Muslim women experienced. The respondents could mark all the appropriate answers and add their own, what 4 people did. The questionnaire listed violent behaviours such as: "unpleasant, including vulgar comments about me on social media," "unpleasant, including vulgar private messages," "harassing me on social media for my faith," "making fun of my appearance (hijab, covering my body, etc.)," as well as those related to the negative perception of Muslims and religion in general, such as: "insulting Muslims and Islam" and "inciting hatred towards Muslims and Islam." As can be seen in the chart below, the most indications – 23, were obtained by insulting Muslims and Islam, and the second most frequently indicated by the respondents was inciting hatred towards Muslims – 19 women. 14 declared that they had experienced direct cyberbullying, i.e., unpleasant, including vulgar comments,

unpleasant, including vulgar private messages and making fun of their appearance – 14 indications each. 5 respondents stated that they had been or were being harassed on social media because of their faith, and one that she had experienced threats to harm herself and her children. Also, one person declared that she was not attacked but her Muslim husband (that was the only non-Muslim woman who participated in the survey). Two people stated that they had not experienced cyberbullying, with one of them commenting that she had not had such experiences personally but observed manifestations of Islamophobia on the Internet. One of the respondents stated that she did not privately use social media.

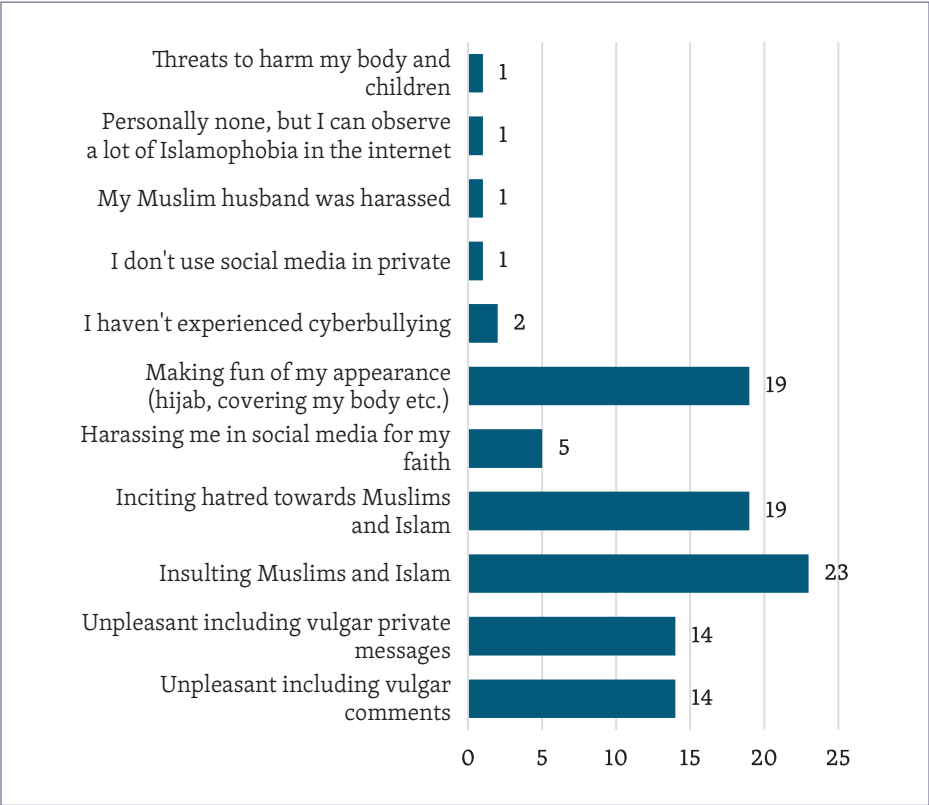Chart 3. What kind of cyberbullying have you experienced?

In the fourth question, the author asked the respondents to react to six statements regarding cyberbullying against Muslim women. Two sentences – "Muslim women are a group particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying" and "people agree on cyberbullying against Muslim women" – reflected opinions present in groups for Muslim women, which the author observed during

netnographic research. Two more – "due to negative experiences with haters, I suspended my activity on social media" and the "experience of cyberbullying caused me negative emotional states (e.g., fear of people)" – referred to the experiences and emotions shared by Muslim women related to their presence in social media. The last two were formulated as a counterweight to sentences confirming the presence and experience of violence: "in social media, a Muslim woman can feel safe" and "other users defend Muslim women when they are attacked for their faith in social media." As can be seen in the chart below, 27 respondents agree with the statement that Muslim women are a group particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying (20 – strongly agree, 7 – rather agree). 4 respondents have no opinion on this matter, and only 1 rather disagrees with this statement. No respondent strongly denies this. Slightly fewer confirmatory indications – 23, gained: people agree with violence against Muslim women (14 strongly agree, 9 rather agree). 6 respondents had no opinion on this matter, and 2 disagreed with this statement (1 each – rather not and strongly not). 12 respondents confirmed that the experience of cyberbullying had caused them negative emotional states (6 each strongly and rather agree). Almost the same number of respondents have the opposite opinion, 11 respondents (2 rather not and 9 definitely not). 6 women have no opinion on this matter. Also, 12 believe that people defend Muslim women when they are attacked online for their faith (8 strongly agree and 4 rather agree). 8 people think the opposite (5 rather disagree and 3 strongly disagree), and as many as 10 have no opinion on the matter. Regarding leaving social media as a response to cyberbullying, 9 respondents declare that they have decided to suspend their activity on social media due to the attacks (5 strongly agree and 4 rather agree). 12 surveyed women think the opposite (4 rather disagree and 8 strongly disagree). The opinion with the fewest positive statements is: Muslim women feel safe on social media, which received 6 positive indications (1 strongly agree, 5 rather agree). As many as 17 respondents have the opposite opinion (10 rather disagree, 7 strongly disagree), and 7 have no opinion.

In question 5, the author asked the respondents about the nature of their involvement in social media. The respondents had the opportunity to mark all the appropriate answers, including various forms of activity, from running their own profile on social media and administering/moderating a group through various types of activity in groups to passive reception of content published by others. As seen in chart 5, the most responses – 21 declared they were passive users. Slightly fewer, *ex-aequo* 14, admit they commented and shared the works of others. 11 respondents declared activity in a social group, the same number of whom admitted that they administered a group on social media and one fewer – 9 people – that they ran a channel or profile on social media. 2 declared other activities.
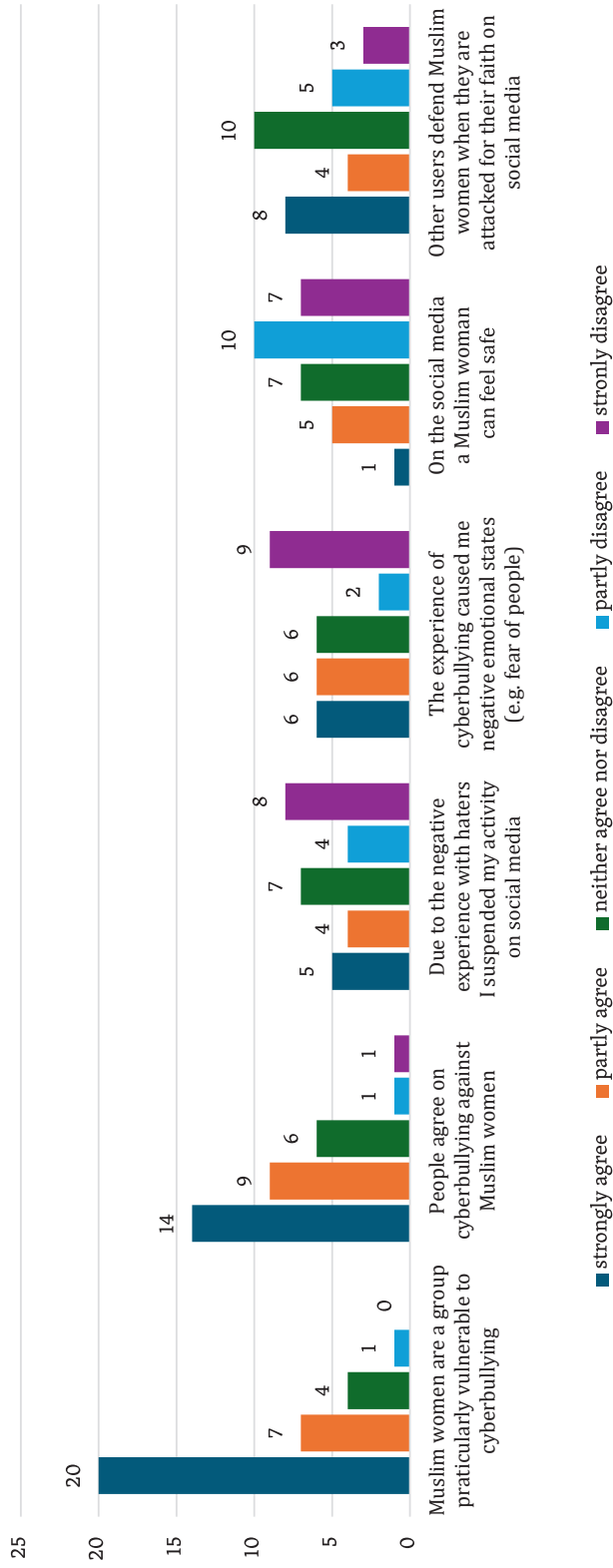
Chart 4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Categories (legend): strongly agree, partly agree, neither agree nor disagree, partly disagree, stronly disagree

Muslim women are a group praticularly vulnerable to cyberbullying
- strongly agree: 20
- partly agree: 7
- neither agree nor disagree: 4
- partly disagree: 1
- stronly disagree: 0

People agree on cyberbullying against Muslim women
- strongly agree: 14
- partly agree: 9
- neither agree nor disagree: 6
- partly disagree: 1
- stronly disagree: 1

Due to the negative experience with haters I suspended my activity on social media
- strongly agree: 5
- partly agree: 4
- neither agree nor disagree: 7
- partly disagree: 4
- stronly disagree: 8

The experience of cyberbullying caused me negative emotional states (e.g. fear of people)
- strongly agree: 6
- partly agree: 6
- neither agree nor disagree: 6
- partly disagree: 2
- stronly disagree: 9

On the social media a Muslim woman can feel safe
- strongly agree: 1
- partly agree: 5
- neither agree nor disagree: 7
- partly disagree: 10
- stronly disagree: 7

Other users defend Muslim women when they are attacked for their faith on social media
- strongly agree: 8
- partly agree: 4
- neither agree nor disagree: 10
- partly disagree: 5
- stronly disagree: 3

The author was interested in the correlation between running a chan-nel/profile and the intensity of experiencing violence (question no. 2). As the table below shows, respondents who are active in social media experience a whole range of violent behaviours, including threats of bodily harm to the
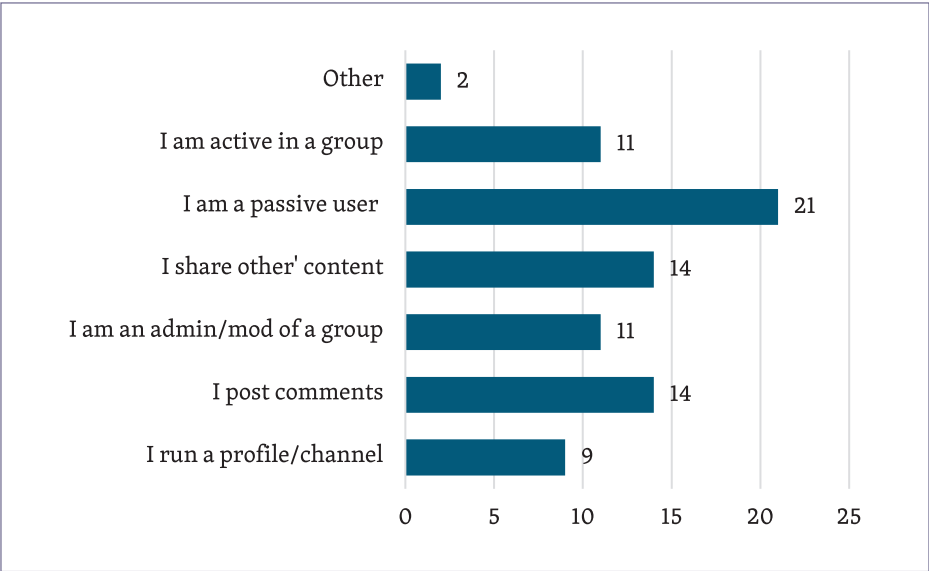

Chart 5. How are you active online as a Muslim?

respondent and her children (Respondent no. 23[1]). All the respondents de-clared that they had experienced insults to Muslims and Islam on the Inter-net, and most of them said that they had encountered vulgar comments and offensive private messages sent to them. The fewest responses (4) mentioned harassment due to their faith. Only one of the social media profile/channel runners declared she had not experienced cyberbullying (Respondent 21).

Table 1

Respondent no.									
Kind of experienced cyberbullying	1	5	13	14	21	23	28	20	33
Unpleasant, including vulgar comments	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Unpleasant, including vulgar private messages	x		x	x		x	x		x

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[1] To maintain anonymity, the respondents' data have been coded numerically, if they are mentioned in the article, they are a respondent + serial number.

Insulting Muslims and Islam	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Inciting hatred towards Muslims	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
Harassment on social media for faith	x		x			x			x
Mocking the appearance	x	x	x			x	x		x
other						x			

Another correlation that interested the author was the co-occurrence of the lack of experiencing violence, declared by 5 respondents (question 2) with their activity (question 5) and the type of experienced cyberbullying (question 3). As shown in the table below, which compares the respondents' answers to selected questions, the lack of experience with violence is associated with a limited way of using social media. 4 out of 5 respondents declare that they are passive recipients of content, and only one (Respondent 17) declares that her activity is participation in a social group. Moreover, one respondent (Respondent 9) limits her online activity only to professional work. In turn, Respondent 15, who posted a longer statement declaring passive participation in the online world, explains that it results from experiencing violence in the real world: "I am a passive user. In the past, I shared posts, but due to the verbal violence experienced against me in the real world, I was afraid of additional ostracism and deleted everything I posted. I am afraid that if I am recognised online, I will also encounter a negative attitude there."

Summarising this part of the study, it can be noted that the phenomenon of cyberbullying is an everyday experience of Muslim women, and the only form of protection is by minimising online activity. However, only a few of the respondents have decided to do so. The rest accept cyberbullying as an inevitable consequence of their online presence. Most of the respondents also believe that as Muslim women, they are particularly vulnerable to online violence, which happens with social acceptance. In other words, a sense of inability to avoid cyberbullying observed during netnographic research has been confirmed. The surveyed women feel attacked, and, as the results show, this is not without real basis. All had contact with online attacks aimed at Muslims, and those who are particularly active, experience various forms of cyberbullying, from vulgar comments to threats of violence.

The last question in the survey concerned Muslim women's ideas for overcoming the unfavourable situation. It was open-ended, and providing an answer was not obligatory. 23 respondents shared their thoughts. Based on the content analysis, the author identified three main themes: helplessness, a conviction about the need for social education and, interestingly, an appeal

Table 2

Respondent no.	2	9	15	16	17
Q. 2.	No cyberbullying experience	No cyberbullying experience	No cyberbullying experience	No cyberbullying experience	No cyberbullying experience
Q. 3.	Other: No cyberbullying experience	Other: I do not use it privately	Other: Personally, none, but I see many manifestations of Islamophobia online	Insulting Muslims, inciting hatred…	Other: No cyberbullying experience
Q. 5.	Passive user	Professional user without showing an image	Passive user + longer statement cited above	Group admin Content sharing	Active in a social media group

for changes within the Muslim community, as well as two secondary themes: the theme of criminal responsibility (2 statements) and the lack of experience of violence (1 statement). The theme of helplessness appeared in 5 statements, including 2 short ones, such as "I don't know or I have no idea" and 3 extensive ones, the authors of which drew attention to the Islamophobia rooted in Poland and the lack of tolerance for any diversity, e.g. "In my opinion, if Islamophobia is widely accepted, it will be difficult to do anything to fix the situation on the Internet. People will always find a way to torment another person" (Respondent 8). There was also a statement suggesting that the only way to avoid attacks is emigration: "Leave Poland 😊 and publish in English" (Respondent 11). The theme of education was the most extensive. It appeared in as many as 12 statements, which contained proposals for broadly understood educational activities not only for Muslims but for all minorities, e.g.: "Early school education about tolerance, diversity Poland is full of hatred towards Jehovah's Witnesses; religious Christians; Jews, a woman with a headscarf is exposed to hate and life-threatening situations" (Respondent 28). "I think it is important to promote a culture of tolerance" (Respondent 32). "There must be profound cultural changes and a desire from above to educate Poles about people of a different faith or skin colour" (Respondent 15). In addition to the need to educate in the spirit of tolerance, the respondents also noticed the role of the media in educating society: "More respect for other people is needed. A different upbringing. Different media. Openness and acceptance" (Respondent 12). "[...] so that they read about this topic in their free time from the right, true sources" (Respondent 4). The theme of an appeal for changes within the community was present in 5 statements and mainly referred to the need for mutual support and showing ourselves as an internally coherent group, e.g. "We should support each other as a community" (Respondent 22). "[...] accept each other, respect each other, this will slow down the spiral of hate from people from outside [...]" (Respondent 23). And conscious use of social media: "However, it is also important that Muslim women themselves should be aware of the way they use social media" (Respondent 32).

To sum up, as the statements quoted above show, Muslim women see the greatest chances for introducing social change that will reduce violence, including cyberbullying, and generally will have a positive impact on their situation in a broadly understood social education. They consider lack of tolerance, prejudice, and racism not only directed against them but all minorities. They also believe that education towards mutual tolerance should cover not only them but all discriminated groups.

Analysis of the content of three in-depth interviews allowed a closer look at the threads highlighted in the survey. All respondents (for anonymity, their data have been coded and, in the text, they are referred to as RW1, RW2, RW3) operate on several platforms, but they mainly focus on TikTok. They all

declare that their goal is education and information in the field of religion, and they aim to overcome prejudices and stereotypes. However, they are of different ages and represent different rhetorical styles. RW1 is 45+, and her channel focuses on education for the non-Muslim majority. In the recordings, the author explains the basics of the religion of Islam. The statements are formulated in a neutral tone and often read out. The author cites various religious and scientific sources. More personal elements appear only during the live broadcast when the host of the channel shows her face covered with a niqab, which she admits intensifies the aggression. RW2 is a person aged 30+, and her channel also is half aimed at non-Muslims and half at Muslims. As she describes, her original intention was to create content exclusively for non-Muslims because, according to her explanation, "I noticed that of all the nations I know, Poles ask the fewest questions. And that is why the entire account that I have [...] refers to answering questions that are asked to me anonymously on the web by Poles who would never approach me in real life." Content for Muslims has appeared with time as it turned out that among her audience, there are many Muslim women who are just starting their steps in religion and are looking for information. RW3 is a high school student. Despite declaring to run a channel with educational content, she admits that her TikTok account has been banned several times. When asked by the article's author what she thinks could be the reason for such actions, she replied: "somehow, I don't know, in my case it is since I simply don't know [...]." She also believes that this is the result of her profile being deliberately reported to the TikTok administration, which "has a problem with such content." Therefore, it can be seen that RW1 and RW2 approach their social media activities more thoughtfully and consciously, whereas there is a great dose of spontaneity in RW3's activities, which may be related to age. There is also a noticeable difference in how each respondent interacts and evaluates their commenters. RW1 and RW2 avoid confrontation. For example, RW2 does not allow people to speak or even participate in live broadcasts about whom she has real suspicions that their goal is to cause commotion. RW1 reports hateful comments to the administration and removes them. Both block those visitors who repeatedly publish offensive, hateful or other unpleasant (e.g., obscene) content. RW2 also uses the help of volunteers to moderate the channel and keep order. RW3 says she does not take such actions: "I don't delete. There was something on TikTok where I had a filter, so to speak, and you could check which comments didn't go through because they were too, well, there were some insults. Honestly, I accept all of them literally and I just argue with these people." Regardless of the style of interaction they adopt, all three respondents experience cyberbullying, which most often takes the form of hate speech. They all also believe that it is an inevitable consequence of their activity in the field of the topics they address. RW2: "Yes, I think that this

is something that every Polish Muslim woman who is on social media, so to speak, is in our terms and conditions, right? We must accept it." RW3: "I think that every Polish Muslim woman has at least experienced some cyberbullying." When asked about the forms of violence they have experienced, they admit that cyberbullying involves persistent use of hate speech. When asked about the details, they describe it as follows. RW1: "I am being, insulted, I have been threatened with death, I have been wished for death. Most of such situations take place live, then in private messages, less often in comments. [...]." RW3: "Well, how many times have they called me names for this, I really can't count them." RW2 also admits that comments and private messages regularly contain very offensive words, which the attackers hide from the algorithm by adding, for example, letters in a foreign alphabet so that the system cannot recognise the language of the statement and thus vulgarities. To illustrate what kind of expressions are used against the respondents, we can quote fragments of the statement of RW1, who was the only one who decided to quote them in full: "You cunt convert. Get the fuck out of Poland, you're out of here." "Get treatment for your head, you disgusting nightmare." "Fuck off whore," "Get out of here whore, fuck Islam, heil Hitler." "Kill yourself, you faggot whore," etc. RW2 considered that repeating what her profile visitors can write is too offensive, and in the case of RW3, the article's author did not ask for a quote due to the young age of the person being interviewed (less than 18 years old). In addition to vulgarisms, the content of verbal attacks includes issues of patriotism, sexual and marital issues, appearance, and, of course, religion. Referring to the topic of patriotism, each of the respondents experienced accusations of betraying the nation or Polishness. RW2: "people simply had a problem with me being a Muslim, they thought I had betrayed my country, that I could no longer call myself Polish." RW3: "[...] these people really try to refer to the fact that I had betrayed the country [...]." Another motive for the attacks is sexuality and intimate life. The perpetrators of the attacks often refer to the stereotypical idea of an interpersonal relationship with a man from an Arab country as a motive for conversion. RW3: "Mainly, I have observed that people spew venom at Muslim women who married men from the Middle East, or generally from Muslim countries, and they assume that these girls converted to Islam for their husbands, which in most cases is not true." RW2: "There are a lot of [attacks], unfortunately, regarding my husband [...] on a sexual and marital basis, so to speak. And I say it is very funny, because they do not know that he is Polish" (he is, like the respondent, a Muslim revert). They also cite popular, negative stereotypes about Muslims, such as those quoted by RW1: "[...] Islam persecutes and restricts women, that all Muslims have 4 wives, [...] husbands beat their wives, constantly suggesting intercourse with goats." The perpetrators are not interested in conducting a substantive discussion, only in ridiculing and

disturbing. However, as RW2 describes it, it is an organised activity, probably around the X (formerly Twitter), where attackers gather to plan further actions: "These are not random haters. And they are also guided by some ideas [...] these are so-called nationalists. [...] I'll tell you how I know [...] because on my live stream, 30 people suddenly become 200 and a lot of hate begins [...] only other Muslim women explained it to me [...]." What also arouses aggression in the perpetrators is the clothing of Muslim women, especially the niqab – a face veil. All 3 respondents experienced attacks because of this item of clothing, although none of them wears it every day. RW3 does not appear in the recordings, while RW1 and RW2 appear in live broadcasts with their faces covered, among other things, so as not to be recognised and so that cyberattacks do not turn into attacks in the real world. RW3: "[...] I don't really show myself on social media [...] People only nagged me there, for example, because I wrote that I wanted to wear a niqab." RW1: "A lot of people react with outright fury when they see me live in a niqab. There are texts like 'take off those rags'." RW2: "I don't show my face on the internet, nor do I use my real name, because such people really try to criticise my appearance, which I don't have [...] There are often comments like it's good that she covers her face, because if she didn't, she would be, I don't know, ugly or her eyes would burn or something like that." The perpetrators of the attacks perceive the niqab as a manifestation of enslavement, not realising that for a Muslim woman, it is protection against unwanted glances. Paradoxically, their aggressive attitude towards the face veil encourages the respondents to wear it. Similarly, attacking religion does not weaken the feeling in any of the respondents that their chosen path is the right one. As RW1 confesses, "I have been treated for depression for a dozen or so years, the medication has calmed me down and I do not react emotionally to this hate. It has absolutely no effect on my faith. I have bigger problems daily." RW3, on the other hand, declares: "literally, this hate even motivated me at some point to make more content like this, just to show them that it doesn't bother me at all, and I will be a Muslim, whether they like it or not." RW2 speaks similarly but more subduedly: "[...] I am a little grateful to God for these haters. Because when they write something to me about a topic, I do some research on the subject and expand my knowledge. So, in a way, all these haters only strengthen me in my religion." When asked what they think should be done to change their situation, all point out the educational activities. RW1: "I know that education is the most important thing, that's why I teach about what Islam is and what it teaches." RW2 also notices that the Polish social and media space lack portraying Muslim women as common people: "If they saw us smiling, laughing, spilling sauce on our blouses, it would suddenly turn out, oh wait, these are also normal people." Furthermore, RW3 admits she talks to her family members, and as a result, some of them have changed their negative view

of Muslims. In other words, the lack of trustworthy information supports the resentment that all three surveyed women try to combat in their TikTok profiles.

Summing up the analysis of the interviews, regardless of age or the style of their narratives, each of them experiences intense violence in the form of hate speech. The main motive for the attacks is their religion, which they try to make more familiar to Internet users. The perpetrators who consider themselves defenders of national values use vulgarisms and simplified thought patterns, e.g., a Muslim cannot be a Polish woman, and refer to negative stereotypes of Muslims and the religion itself, e.g., as unfriendly to women. However, they do not achieve the intended results.

Discussion

The studied phenomenon of cyberbullying against Polish Muslim women has its deeper roots resulting from a strongly intensified fear of otherness in general and a still strong belief in Poland as a monocultural country, where there is no room for such a combination as being both the Muslim and the Pole. However, resentment does not keep up with the dynamics of social change because the number of women identifying as such is growing. As a developing group aware of its distinctiveness and being rejected, Polish Muslim women are looking for a space where they can speak with their own voice. They find it on social media, where, although exposed to attacks, they feel comfortable enough to develop their narrative despite any obstacles. The results of the survey and in-depth interviews presented above confirm the research hypothesis that most of the surveyed Muslim women experience online violence due to their religion, which in most cases takes the form of hate speech. All the surveyed women have experienced insults to their religion, and most have encountered attacks directed directly at them. Despite the conducted survey about cyberbullying, one respondent expressed she was attacked in the real world for her faith. Most of them neither feel safe online nor believe they can count on support when attacked. They also see there is a social acceptance of injustice and violence towards them. The main and relatively effective way of avoiding cyberbullying used by some respondents is to limit their activity on the Internet. However, most consider it an inevitable element of everyday life, which, as they declare, does not affect their religiosity.

When it comes to the interview participants, all experience significant levels of cyberbullying, which takes the form of insults, attacks with sexual overtones, defamation of religion and accusations of betraying the nation. The protection methods they use, such as avoiding showing their faces or omitting topics related to personal life, become an opportunity for

perpetrators to increase their attacks. Muslim women from both questioned groups do not feel safe in the virtual world, but they only partly believe that they are particularly stigmatised in this matter because they also perceive cyberbullying as part of a broader social phenomenon of lack of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Some respondents consider this a phenomenon beyond the possibility of change, although most hope for change in broadly understood education.

Summary

The research presented in the article confirms the hypothesis that Polish Muslim women experience cyberbullying. Of course, due to the narrow research sample, this article certainly does not exhaust the subject. However, the author intended to draw the audience's attention to the issue of Polish Muslim women and their struggle to be a part of modern Poland's society and present a small sample of the daily challenges they face. As the results show, Muslim women see the most chance to change their unfavourable situation in broadly understood social education. For sure, they are right. Without a widespread diversity-oriented education, overcoming the ghost of national resentment will be hard.

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Abstract

The article addresses the issue of cyberbullying towards Polish Muslim women, who experience increased attacks due to their religion. The text presents the results of a survey and in-depth interviews with Polish Muslim women. The analysis aimed to examine how Muslim women relate to the cyberbullying they experience. Does it influence their decisions to engage in online activity or their religiosity? And how do Muslim women see the possibility of changing this unfavourable situation?

Słowa kluczowe: cyberprzemoc, polskie muzułmanki, inny, mowa nienawiści

Keywords: cyberbullying, Polish Muslim women, different, hate speech

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