



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



**Rukhsana Ahmed**

Co-investigator (Strand 4)

[rahmed@uottawa.ca](mailto:rahmed@uottawa.ca)

**Associate Professor**

Department of Communication

University of Ottawa

### **Biography**

Rukhsana Ahmed is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa. She received her BA (Hons.) and MSS degrees in International Relations from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. As a Fulbright Scholar and Delta Kappa Gamma Society International World Fellow, she completed her MA degree in International Development Studies from Ohio University, USA. She earned her MA degree in Communication Studies and PhD degree in Health Communication from Ohio University, USA.

Rukhsana Ahmed is a faculty affiliate of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies and the E-Business Program at the University of Ottawa. She is the Principal Investigator (PI) of the Ottawa Multicultural Media Initiative (OMMI). She is co-director of the Diversity and Equity Research Group (DERG) at the University of Ottawa. She is a research affiliate of the Bertram Loeb Research Consortium on Organ and Tissue Donation.

Rukhsana Ahmed's research lies at the intersections of health, interpersonal and intercultural communication, media, and other realms of communication including religion, gender, and development. Her research has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR); The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Collaborative Program; and the Ohio Division of the American Cancer Society (ACS) Partnership. She has published in mainstream communication journals, nursing journals, health studies outlets, and in journals at the intersection of health, communication, and culture. She

co-authored the book, *Health Literacy in Canada: A Primer for Students* (Canadian Scholars' Press Inc, 2014). She co-edited the books, *New Media Considerations and Communication Across Religions and Cultures* (IGI Global, 2014); *Health Communication and Mass Media: An Integrated Approach to Policy and Practice* (Gower, 2013); and *Medical Communication in Clinical Contexts* (Kendall Hunt, 2012). She serves on editorial boards of and reviews papers for journals in the areas of communication, health, nursing, and media.

Rukhsana Ahmed received the Top 5 Paper in Health Communication award at the 2006 Eastern Communication Association Annual Convention, USA, for her co-authored paper *The Effect of Source Credibility on Consumers' Perceptions of the Quality of Health Information on the Internet*. She received the Distinguished Edited Book Award (2013) by the Applied Communication Division of the National Communication Association, USA, for her co-edited book, *Medical Communication in Clinical Contexts*.

## **Research Statement**

Within the broader field of communication studies, my primary research area focuses on exploring the role of communication processes in improving health outcomes among marginalized communities and promoting broader social changes in local and international health contexts. I am particularly interested in the ways in which systems of beliefs, values, actions, and symbols are shared, or not, by people and how social groups influence communication in health care interactions. I am also interested in the ways in which people's cultural selves become entwined with race, ethnicity, gender, and social class groups and shape their perceptions of health, illness, and health care.

My research embraces the cross/trans/inter-disciplinary nature of communication scholarship. In this scholarship, I use qualitative, quantitative, rhetorical, and critical procedures relevant to the question I ask and the audience I address. Within this diversity, however, lies a common interest in exploring how symbolic action is used to help the public make sense of complex policy decisions, particularly in the arena of health communication.

Although my research program is deeply rooted in health communication, my interdisciplinary background has afforded me to develop interests and establish fruitful collaborative research partnerships and multisectoral projects in diverse areas, including religious diversity, immigrant integration, multicultural media, and organ and tissue donation, among others. Some of my current projects include the following:

In the context of the Religion and Diversity Project, my research has focused on the intersections of health and religious and cultural diversity. For example, I have examined health beliefs among Muslim women in Canada for exploring culturally and religiously appropriate health care practices. This project has offered me the opportunity to develop knowledge of a rapid growing minority population in Canada, particularly Muslim immigrant women in Ottawa, and establish networks with faith based community leaders.

Recently, I embarked on a project at the intersections of culture, religion, and organ donation. I have finished conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with Muslim immigrants in Ottawa to explore their knowledge and attitude toward issues of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. The next phase of the project, funded by the Religion and Diversity Project's 2015-2016 Innovation Grant competition, involves exploration of what and how Christians living in Canada know and feel about organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

My PhD dissertation research focused on issues of cultural competence in health care. I have been interested in individual actor's creation, negotiation, accommodation, and adaptation of communicative practices in the health care arena. Patient satisfaction is an important performance indicator that influences treatment outcomes and overall organizational effectiveness. Using my PhD dissertation data set, as part of a collaborative effort, I have developed and published scales to measure patients' perception of physicians' cultural competence in health care interactions which have received scholarly attention from home and abroad. I have been continuing and expanding this line of research and engaged in testing, adapting/translating, and validating the scales to use them in cross-cultural health care settings.

Since 2011, I have been leading/directing the Ottawa Multicultural Media Initiative (OMMI) project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant (PDG). The project brings together communication scholars, political scientists, and geographers with strong interest in issues related to multicultural media, immigrant inclusion and integration, diversity, and community-building. The OMMI is set forth to develop a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral partnership that links the University of Ottawa and the City of Ottawa to a network of multicultural media producers, leading multicultural media scholars and practitioners, representatives of the city's Chinese, Somali, South Asian and Latin American communities, and other local stakeholders. The OMMI research team is studying the opportunities and challenges associated with Ottawa's growing multicultural digital and print media for newcomer wellbeing, inclusion, and integration.