

## Coverage of Indian newspapers on Muslim issues: Content analysis of The Times of India and The Hindu

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### Abstract

*India is a home to multi-cultural communities, where different religions, multi-lingual and ethnic groups exist. The issue of Muslims and media is fiercely debated issue across India as well as the world. The Islamo-phobia gained lot of popularity among mass media. Love jihad, Terrorism, and suicide bombing are the frequent topics discussed in mainstream Indian media. The main objective of the research is to find out the visibility and the frequent pitch of the news coverage on second largest minority in the mainstream newspapers that play a vital role in representation of Muslims. Comparative study was conducted and content analysis method was used to find out the tone of the newspapers. For the purpose of the study, two national newspapers The Times of India and The Hindu were analyzed for the period of two months excluding the supplements.*

**Key Words:** Muslims, Visibility, Media, the Hindu, Times of India

### Introduction

India is a land of multi-cultural, linguistic and ethnic groups. According census (2011) Islam is the largest minority in India and Muslims officially comprises 24% of countries population. According to Sachar (2006), Muslims comprise the second largest religious group in India and the treatment of Muslims the largest minority group—in a pluralistic society like India has been the subject of debates and discussions. The image of minorities depends to great extent on how they are been portrayed by media. As Campbell

(1995) argued “Media creates the invisibility of minorities by marginalizing their voices and depicts them negatively and in stereotyped perspective”. Mass media has shaped certain stereotypes and audience holds this prism in their mind and examines everything accordingly. Muslims feel that more and more negative stereotypes are being used to describe Muslims in media that distorts their image.

India is the largest democracy and has a very energetic print and electronic media. Kushal (1997) affirms, “Few English newspapers tended to influence

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the thinking of the ruling elite". The Times of India and the Hindu are considered as Indians quality press has wide appeal among educated and young readers.

**Significance of the study:** India has a free media and very active in creating public opinion. Muslims are misrepresented by media and has created stereotypes. Coverage of Muslim issues and the way they are portrayed is a matter of concern. Media and Muslims is a debated issue and have gained lot of interest among readers and researchers as well. Study has examined the coverage of Muslims in mainstream newspapers and the tone used by them. To represent the mainstream newspapers for the study, two major newspapers namely the Times of India and the Hindu have been chosen on the basis of wide circulation, readership and influence among the readers which are said to be trend setters of Indian press.

### Literature Review

A survey planned and executed by Chamaria, Kumar and Yadav (2006) found that India's national media lacks social diversity; it does not reflect the country's social profile. They added that Muslims are severely under-represented in the national media, mainly in the English media. They are only 3 per cent among the key decision makers compared to 13.4 per cent in the country's population(2001 census)while Hindu upper caste men dominate the media. They comprise about 8 per cent of India's population but among the key decision makers of the national media; their share is as high as 71 per cent.

Martinez (2003) argued that media have been most important contributors to an

erroneous image of Islam by stereotyping all Muslims as being fundamentalists or terrorists. He concluded that there is no resemblance between 'Media Islam' and 'True Islam'.

Amanullah (2003) is of the view that by and large the vernacular press follows the lines of 'Hindutva'. It tends to practice yellow journalism while dealing with issues related to Muslims. In comparison, the mainstream English press tries to strike a balance in reporting. But, when the minorities are concerned, particularly Muslims, most of the prominent English dailies have suddenly been affected by a tendency to accord them a little more coverage than before.

Thussu and Freddman (2003) say that influenced by the discourse of the 'clash of civilization' and strengthened by the events of 11 September 2001, militant Islam is projected as a transnational threat, exemplified by shadowy networks such as Al Qaeda, with its alleged links with 'rogue' states like Iraq and Iran. An undifferentiated view of Islamic militancy seems to dominate the discourse, in which militant groups of all hues are linked as parts of a seamless transnational terror network. They fear that the weapons of mass destruction may fall in the hands of such network is at the heart of the US security agenda.

### Research Questions

- How much visibility of Muslim issues is there in newspapers?
- What kind of news is mostly published about the Muslim minority?
- What is the main tendency: positive, negative and neutral of Muslim?

- What are the forms of content about Muslims published in mainstream English daily newspapers?

**Methodology**

The study analyses the coverage of Muslim issues by mainstream newspapers. By considering the need, nature of this research project, following objective, method and techniques are used.

**Objectives**

- To find out the visibility of Muslim related news in newspapers and what sort of news is being published mostly
- To study the tone of the newspapers: positive, negative and neutral of Muslims in newspapers
- To study different forms of content such as news stories, photos, editorials, features and letters to editors in mainstream newspapers.
- To compare both the newspaper in terms of issues regarding to Muslim minority.

**Hypothesis:** Most of the content on Muslims in mainstream newspapers occupy with negative tendency

**Sample:** For the purpose of study two newspapers Times of India and The Hindu were randomly selected on the basis of global and national reputation, their wide circulation and readership. The present study has taken only Chandigarh editions as sample because of convenience and availability of newspapers. Newspapers were studied for the period of two months: December (2014) and January (2015) excluding the supplement copies. In this study 124 editions both from Times of India and The Hindu were analyzed.

**Tool:** A master code sheet for content analyzes was prepared by the researcher and engaged for the purpose of study.

**Research design:** The particular study chooses content analysis as a research design to discover the tone and coverage of Muslim related news in newspapers.

**Table 1: Criteria of measurement**

<i>S. No</i>	<i>Media (Print)</i>	<i>Sample size (124)</i>	<i>Criteria of measurement</i>	<i>Tool</i>
1	<i>The Times of India</i>	62	<i>Positive, Negative Neutral, Comparative analysis</i>	<i>Code sheet</i>
2	<i>The Hindu</i>	62	<i>Positive, Negative Neutral Comparative analysis</i>	

**Method:** In this study content analysis technique was used to discover the pattern, tone and visibility of Muslim issues in mainstream newspapers. Dominick and Wimmer(2003: 141) defined content analysis as a “method of studying and

analyzing communication in an objective, systematic and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. This research technique has allowed the researcher to translate the media images

into categories of content that can be tabulated and examined. Moreover if the content is carefully examined and categories are clear, the analysis is an effective and perfect research tool. The analysis will remain systematic and objective, following proper procedures and giving each item an equal examination and categorization”.

**Unit of analysis:** Every printed material in the form of news stories, editorials, photographs, articles, features and letters to editor of selected newspapers is unit to be analyzed. To find out the negative, positive and neutral tone, following categories were made.

**News Stories:** The reports of recent events published in the selected newspapers that have the potentiality to evoke public interest.

**Editorial:** The considered opinion published in the designated editorial columns in the selected newspapers on a timely topic.

**Article:** The perceptive analysis of topics published in the selected newspapers that have the potentiality to arrest the attention of the public.

**Feature:** Soft news usually interesting written with emotional touch and extra information published in the selected newspapers.

**Photographs:** All pictures taken by camera appeared in the selected newspapers.

**Letters to Editor:** Feedback of the newspaper by readers published in the letters to the editor column in the selected newspapers.

### **Categorizations of themes regarding coverage of Muslim issues:**

The printed material related to Muslim issues of selected newspapers was categorized under different themes to be analyzed according to negative, positive and neutral tone.

**Political:** Coverage of all the political News items published by newspapers regarding Muslims.

**Religious:** Coverage of news regarding Muslim religion.

**Women:** Coverage of Muslim women issues.

**Crime:** Coverage of Muslims involved in Crime.

**Development:** Coverage of News items regarding the Development of Muslims.

**Business:** Coverage of News regarding Business

**War:** Coverage of news regarding bombing, encounters, terrorism, and gunfights.

**Positive Tone:** The content related to Muslim affairs published in different forms were projected in a positive way. The coverage of Muslims, which depict positive changes in their political, economic and social sector, development, promotion of peace, involvement in the accords or agreement leading to harmony and prosperity with other religious communities were coded as positive.

**Negative Tone:** The content related to Muslims which reflect social strife, natural and human steered deaths and destruction, political instability, catastrophic, chaos

and anarchy, shabby living conditions, criminal and immoral acts, and political, economic and social intra state and interstate conflicts and disputes were coded as negative.

**Neutral Tone:** The content that carry no emphasis on either positive or negative aspects of the Muslims' economic, political and social life were coded as neutral. Neutral category is not included in the test of significance in the present study, because neutral coverage do not clearly mention emphasis on the Muslims image

#### **Profiles of the Selected Newspapers:**

A brief profile of the newspapers selected for the study can be helpful to understand the reason why Times of India and The Hindu were selected from mainstream newspapers.

*The Times of India* is a leading English language broadsheet daily newspaper in India. It is owned and managed by Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd. (The Times Group) of the Sahu Jain family. The newspaper has the largest and widest circulation among all English language newspapers in the world across all formats (broadsheet, tabloid, compact, Berliner and online). It was certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulation as the world's largest selling English language daily, ranked it as the 8th largest selling newspaper in any language in the world. The (2014) Indian Readership Survey (IRS) findings shows that The Times of India is the most widely read English language newspaper with a readership of 7.643 million.

*The Hindu* is an Indian English daily newspaper. Founded in 1878 has built an unrivalled reputation for reliability and truthful presentation of news. It has come to be recognized as the most comprehensive English newspaper. According to the Indian Reader ship survey(2014), it is the third mostly widely read English newspaper in India with the average qualifying scale of 1.39 million copies. The Hindu was founded on the principles of fairness and justice. It became, in 1995, the first Indian newspaper to offer an online edition.

**Data collection:** The researcher collected primary data for the period of two months December 2014 and January 2015. Both the newspapers were analyzed using a code sheet.

**Limitation of the study:** The current study was done in certain limitations such as: due to time constraints the researcher only analyzed the visibility, coverage of Muslim issues and the tone; positive, negative and neutral were used in newspapers; the researcher not analyze the text of other related issues; more over only two newspapers were analyzed published in two months.

#### **Analysis and Results**

This research study attempts to analyze the coverage of Muslim issues published in mainstream newspapers and the tone used by the newspapers. After collecting all the data, the researcher has presented it in the form of table.

**Table 2:**

**Coverage of Muslim Issues in two newspapers: The Times of India and The Hindu in two months: December 2014 and January 2015**

<i>Coverage of Muslim issues</i>	<i>Total (n124)</i>	
	<i>Times of India</i>	<i>The Hindu</i>
<i>Political News</i>	40	61
<i>Religious News</i>	04	10
<i>Crime News</i>	01	05
<i>Women News</i>	07	14
<i>Education News</i>	01	05
<i>DevelopmentNews</i>	09	06
<i>Business News</i>	01	03
<i>War News</i>	67	34

**Interpretation:** Table 2 shows that The Hindu published more political news 61 portraying Muslims in two months in compare to Times of India, which covered 40. Religious news portraying Muslims were published by The Hindu 10 and TOI published only 4. The Hindu published crime news 5 and TOI published only 1. The Hindu published women news 14 and TOI published only 7. The Hindu gave coverage 5 to Educational news and TOI gave coverage only 1. The Hindu published 6 Development news and TOI published 9. The Hindu published 3 Business news items covering Muslims and TOI published only 1. The Hindu gave 34 War news coverage projecting Muslims and the TOI covered 67.

Themes	Times of India			The Hindu		
	P	N	NI	P	N	NI
News stories	15	35	13	11	15	18
Photographs	12	10	11	05	11	07
Editorials	01	0	07	01	04	04
Articles	0	0	0	03	07	03
Features	0	0	0	02	0	02
Letters to the Editor	0	01	0	0	0	04

Note: P-Positive, N-Negative, NI-Neutral, n=124

**Interpretation:** The table 3 shows that TOI published 15 news stories in positive slant, 35 in negative and 13 in neutral while as The Hindu published 11 news stories in positive, 15 in negative and 18 in neutral tone. TOI published 12 photos with positive, 10 photos with negative and 11 with neutral slant in comparison with The Hindu which published only 5 photos with positive slant, 11 photos with negative and 7 photos neutral.

Both newspapers published 1 editorial with positive slant and TOI did not publish any editorial with negative slant while as TH published 4 editorials with negative slant. 7 Editorials were published by TOI with neutral slant and 4 by the TH. TOI did not publish any news article and TH published 3 articles with positive slant, 7 with negative and 3 with neutral slant.

In terms of features, TOI did not publish any feature portraying Muslims. While, as TH published 2 features with positive

slant, none with negative slant and 2 with neutral slant. TOI published only one letters to editors by Muslims with negative slant in whole month while as TH published 4 letters to editors with neutral slant.

**Table 4**

**Slant of the news coverage of Muslims in The Times of India and the Hindu in Themoth of January 2015**

Themes	Times of India			The Hindu		
	P	N	NI	P	N	NI
News stories	14	32	14	18	19	12
Photographs	10	15	10	06	16	11
Editorials	01	0	05	01	07	07
Articles	01	02	01	05	06	02
Features	01	02	0	04	01	01
Letters to the Editor	0	01	0	02	0	06

Note: P-Positive, N-Negative, NI-Neutral, n=124

TOI published 14 news stories with positive slant, 32 with negative and 14 with neutral while as TH published 18 news stories with positive slant, 19 with negative and 12 neutral. TOI published 10 photos with positive, 15 photos negative and 10 photos with neutral slant covering Muslims and TH published 6 photos with positive tendency, 16 with negative and 11 neutral aspect.

In terms of Editorials, TOI published 1 with positive slant, and 5 neutral and no editorial has published with negative tendency. TH published 1 Editorial with positive, 7 negative and 7 neutral. TOI published 1 article with positive, 2 articles negative and 1 neutral. TH published 5 articles with positive, 6 negative and 2 neutral.

In case of features, TOI published 1 feature portraying Muslims in positive slant, 2 negative and there was no feature published in TOI. TH published 4 features with positive slant, 1 negative and 1 neutral. TOI however published 1 letter-to-editor with negative slant. In case of TH, 2 letters-to-editors were published positive and 2 neutral to Muslim issues in the month of January 2015.

**Hypothesis Testing:** This research study is conducted on the basis of single hypothesis. *Hypothesis H1* suggests that the news regarding Muslims is mostly portrayed in negative tone. The obtained result supported the research hypothesis as Table 1 reveals that TOI covered 67 and the Hindu covered 34 war news items in the month of December 2014 and January 2015. Further table 3 and table 4 also show that there is a negative tone projected by the two newspapers portraying Muslims. Hence the Hypothesis is accepted as per the data.

**Discussion and Findings**

The selection and projection of negative dimension of a community as revealed by this study have dangerous consequences and likely to place Muslims in a disadvantageous position. *The Times of India* and *The Hindu* are believed to influence the thinking of both the common man and the ruling elite. These newspapers stand out as India’s quality Press; have a wide appeal, particularly among the educated and the young. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are becoming a cause to impair national unity, solidarity, integrity and social progress. The data analyzed point out clearly that these two mainstream English dailies gave extreme negative projection to Muslim-related content.

- War related news was given most coverage by both the newspapers. The main theme highlighted in war news category was gunfights of militants, bombing and the ISI threats.

- The present study verified that news, photographs, editorials, articles, features and letters-to-editor was found statistically significant in relation to negative projection.

- The Hindu gives more coverage to Muslim issues in compare to Times of India.

- Times of India given more coverage to War related news portraying Muslims in comparison to The Hindu.

- The Hindu published war news mostly in its front-page and Times of India published war news in both front page and other pages also.

- The Hindu published more photos, news articles, features, letters-to-editors than TOI.

- The Hindu published Muslim portraying photos, articles, features and letters-to-editors in positive, negative and neutral slant in comparison to TOI, whereas TOI given less coverage.

**Conclusion:** The second largest constituent of the human race, Muslims has a lot of what may be called negative image in a subject of media discourse. Their social, economic, political and cultural life, indeed, also occupy some space in media, sometimes they are positively treated as progressive but largely negative as enemies of the state both at national and global level. After the events like 9/11, recent ISIS threats have tilted media elucidation of Muslims in more negative tones. Often Muslims are portrayed as terrorists, anti-nationals, communal, fundamentalists etc. This kind of media reporting has the danger of building wrong perceptions about Muslims, having the capability to divide the civilization into groups with the conflicting interest.

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