

Portrayal of the Blasphemy cases in the U.S and Pakistani print media: A content analysis of the selected Blasphemy cases from 2009 to 2011 in New York Times, Washington Post, the news and the Nation

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the nature and treatment of the portrayal of the selected Pakistan's blasphemy cases namely Asia Bibi, Salman Taseer, Shahbaz Bhatti, and Gojra Killing incident in the two leading American and Pakistani newspapers. On the whole the findings of the study divulge that the both Pakistan's newspapers i.e. the News and the Nation portrayed the cases of blasphemy in more objective manners in comparison of the U.S. newspapers i.e. New York Times and Washington Post. It was further explored that the both American newspapers tried to paint the scenario of the selected cases of blasphemy as not only in sensationalized style but it also stereotyped Pakistan as an extremist and as the most radical state in the world country where minorities particularly Christians and Ahmadies more vulnerable are leading their lives in miserable and uncongenial circumstances. It can be concluded in convenient manners on the basis of results of the study that it substantiate Duggan, Martinelli, Neelamalar and Chitra approaches which prove that the media exert its influence on opinion of the masses by not only suppressing the information and facts but also by the choice of perspective. Besides media also escalate the situation by sensationalize the conflict thus makes the resolution difficult and the same policy was adopted by the U.S. newspapers in the treatment of the blasphemy cases.

Keywords: Blasphemy cases, US & Pakistani Print Media; New York Times, Washington Post, The News and The Nation.

1. Introduction:

The escalating number of blasphemy cases in recent years has become a threat for the harmony among communities around the globe in general and Pakistan in particular. Unfortunately every now and then media reports such cases of blasphemy in Pakistan perturbing religious and human activist over and above the man in the street.

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The following incidents which took the lives of the two important political figures in Pakistan because of the blasphemy issue. Asia Bibi a 45 year old hailed from the province of Punjab; she was sentenced to death from the court after being convicted under the blasphemy law. Following that in January 2011, another related incident which was shocking and alarming, Salman Taseer, then governor of Punjab was killed by his security guard for defending Asia Bibi. In another incident On March 2011 Shahbaz Bhatti, Federal Minister of Minority Affairs was shot dead in his car by three unidentified gunmen. The cases were the turning point for initiating debates in national and international mainstream media including the freedom of speech, protecting religious sentiments and amending blasphemy law of Pakistan. Almost every Pakistani directly or indirectly was affected by this situation.

Let's examine and briefly discuss definition of blasphemy in the light of the teaching of various major religion of the world. Blasphemy is one of the forms of criminal libel, and as a libel it protests against the communication that infringes the established social sense of politeness. By definition blasphemy is disrespect towards God, holy personages, religious artifacts, customs and beliefs. It can be any verbal or written statement and any act that is purposely aimed at insulting and dishonoring God, his prophets and sacred entity.

Every major religion has had some form of interdictions against deliberate and explicit blasphemy. Mostly Death is the punishment for committing blasphemy in major religions. In Judaism, speaking evil of God is considered as blasphemy and is inexcusable. In the third book of Torah (24:16) stated that those who speak blasphemy shall surely be put to death. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit and denying the trinity is believed unpardonable in Christianity. It is stated that the person who blasphemes the name of God shall be put to death and all the worshippers shall surely stone him. (24:16) The law book of Hindus "Mansumriti" says that the king should punish a person from lower class with various forms of physical and capital punishments that makes him shudder if he deliberately bothers the priest (9:248).

In Islam blasphemy is irreverence or impolite act, attitude and utterance towards Allah Almighty, holy personage and sacred beliefs (Dr. Zakir Naik). According to Islamic legal system the blasphemer can be non-Muslim or a Muslim. The convict should be an adult, of sound mind and not under coercion. Regarding the punishment of blasphemy in Islam, it is mentioned in glorious Quran:

"The punishment for those who wage war against Allah, and His messengers, and strive with might for mischief through the land is: execution or crucifixion, or the cutting off hands and feet from the opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in the word, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the hereafter". (Surah AL-Maida 5:33)

The Quran advise Muslim to avoid those who find fault with Allah.

"... When ye hear the sign of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not sit with them unless they turn to different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them. For Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith, all in hell". (Quran 4:140)

According to Islamic law there is distinction between blasphemy against Allah and against Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This difference is based on notion of "right of God and right of man". In hadiths and other writings, for someone who

insults Prophet Muhammad (SAW), death is the punishment for him/her. Islam gives option for the blasphemer, he/she can either be killed or crucified, opposite hands and feet can be cut off, and can be exiled from that land. On the other hand other religions give no added option except capital punishment.

1.2 Blasphemy law in Pakistan

The Islamic republic of Pakistan uses its penal code to punish blasphemy. The penalties for blasphemy are up to death and fine according to the criminal code of the country. The law is meant to protect the Islamic authority and the sentiments of majority population and to defend the minorities from being harmed by false accusations.

1.3 Pakistan penal code:

The following clauses of Pakistan Penal Code about blasphemy would be handy for the readers to perceive its implication, nature and punishment of the offence.

295-b: Defiling, etc. of copy of Holy Quran whoever will fully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of Holy Quran of an extract there from or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable for imprisonment of life.

295-c: Use of derogatory remarks, etc.; in respect of Holy Prophet whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall be liable to fine.

298-A: Use of derogatory remarks, etc...in respect of holy personages. Whoever by words either spoken or written, or by visible representation or any imputation or innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiles a sacred name of any wife (Ummul-Momineen) or members of family (Ahle-e-Bait), of the Holy Prophet (SAW), or any of the righteous Caliphs (Khulfa-e- Rashideen) or companions (Sahaba) of the Holy Prophet (SAW) for a term which may extended to three years, or with fine, or with both. (Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973).

1.4 Selected blasphemy cases

The selected blasphemy cases of Pakistan in the three years i.e. 2009 till 2011 are as follows:

- Federal minister for Minority Affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated in Islamabad on March 2, 2011, by three unidentified gunmen. Tehrik-e-Taliban told BBC that they killed the minister because he was a known blasphemer.
- Governor Punjab, Salman Taseer was shot in Islamabad on January 4, 2011 by one of his security guard. The guard then surrendered to the police and told them he had killed Taseer because of his public stance on blasphemy law of Pakistan.
- On 20th November 2010, Asia Bibi was sentenced to death on the charges of blasphemy by the local court. She was sent to jail in June 2009 on the

complaint of her coworkers that she made derogatory remarks about Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

- In August, 2009, Six Christians were killed in Gojra riots, following by an incident of alleged desecration of Holy Quran.

1.5 Statement of the problem

The prime aim of the study is to carry out a content analysis of the publication of selected blasphemy cases of Pakistan in three years i.e. from 2009 till 2011 in Pakistan and US print media.

1.6 Objectives

The objectives of this research study were to analyze the nature of coverage of the blasphemy cases in leading Pak and US newspapers, to examine the media slant on blasphemy cases, to evaluate the image of the country through the publications, to find out how far these publications affect the relationship of the minorities and majority population.

2. Literature review

For many years there has been a heated debate on the difference between free speech and hate speech. The talk got intense media concentration after the Danish newspaper scandal; Muslim world has raised the issue and demanded immediate detention of the newspaper editor under the blasphemy law, whereas Euro-American media asserted this act as freedom of expression. They argued that blasphemy charges are outmoded religious inadequacy whereas freedom of expression is modernity.

Sullivan (2003) did his research on blasphemy and apostasy cases in Egypt that transpired during 1990 and 2001. After a meticulous research on three famous cases, he concluded that there is no compulsion in religion. Islam gives autonomy to the person to believe in God, but it rejects the idea of premeditated abhorrence either verbal or physical. Hassan (2010) presented his research on Tasleema Nasreen case and free speech. Giving the theological and rhetorical consequences, he concluded his work with the noteworthy remark of a well-known Egyptian scholar Mahfouz that free speech and contempt for others believes are two different things. Each person has the right to express himself but not at the cause of hurting someone's sacred and moral ideals.

Ten (1978) has suggested that blasphemy and obscene manifestation should be treated in the light of freedom of expression. He further stated, if such text in any form is harmless then it would be inappropriate to impose censorship on its dissemination by print and electronic media. The author has considered the blasphemy contents as an expression of opinion. Leonard (1993) in his research article has made systematic effort to explore the issue of blasphemy in the context of fundamental civil liberties related to freedom of expression.

Hassner (2011) has embark upon on the venture of a significant research project on the repercussion of blasphemous Danish cartoon reflecting the images of Prophet of Islam Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and tried to find out the reasons why riots took place in nine Muslim counties but not occurred in forty three

remaining Muslim states. In these cartoons objectionable and derogatory language was used for instance, one of the cartoons depicted the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) “Donning a turban like bomb inscribed with the Islamic creed with an ignited fuse” (Bilefsky,2006).

In another research David Lawton (1993) stated that his” interest in blasphemy was re-awakened by the Rushdie affair" and he concluded that the militants should not be supported at all who are involved in the killings of authors/researchers on the pretext of blasphemous charges.Fisher and Ramsay (2000) in their research have analyzed on the four concepts of blasphemy i.e. blasphemy as offense, assort on religion, attack on the sacred personalities and attacked on the blasphemers. They concluded it’s an issue of delicate complex and nature.

Visconsi (2008) in his research article entitled,” The Invention of Criminal Blasphemy” suggested for the development of a special law jurisdiction in context of blasphemy cases. He further argued that the laws regarding blasphemy were first developed in Rex v. Taylor were only for the secularism. He concluded that in this article the notion of Sir Mathew Hale that “Christianity is parcel of the laws of England’ is a step towards the establishment of an English civil religion. Francesconi (2012) in his research article explored how the both Jews and Christians conceived and developed perceptions about censored controversial text in the commentary of Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, 1040–1105).The author further elaborated the way church used the tactics against the Jews in the shape of political, social and cultural segregation and other form of inhumane treatment.

Much has been said and written about the various aspects of blasphemous writings and its implications in the shape of research articles, popular articles and books. In this connection the research work of following authors and researchers is significant and would be useful for the readers and further researchers regarding the issue of blasphemy. Stephen (1993), Talal (1993), Michael (1990), Howard(1993), Gore (1993), Haraway (1991), Stephen (1991), Robert(1991), Mueller, *et al* (2007), Nelson (2007), Smith, and Fisher (2006),Cowel (2006),Bilefsky (2006), Nickerson (2006), Philpott (2007), Pipes (1990), Blom (2008), Douglas (1996), Ernst, (1987), Esposito, John L. (1983), Noddings (1984).

2.2 Hypotheses

The study primarily aimed to test the following hypotheses; these were formulated in the light of pilot study and review of the relevant literature.

- H 1:** It is more likely that the Pakistani selected print media would give greater coverage to issue then the U.S. selected print media.
- H 2:** There would be significant difference between slanting of blasphemy cases by Pak and US print media.
- H 3:** It is more likely that Pakistani selected newspapers would give more favorable and less unfavorable coverage to the issues as compared to the U.S. selected newspapers.
- H 4:** The U.S. selected print media would describe the blasphemy law as atrocious law as compared to Pakistan selected newspapers which would state the law as unprejudiced.

H 5: It is more likely that the U.S. print media would generally depict the accused as the victim of the hate crime.

H 6: Pakistani selected print media would generally portray the accused as a criminal.

H 7: The U.S. selected newspapers would more likely stereotype the whole nation due to the actions of one group as compared to the selected Pakistani print media.

H 8: It is more likely that the U.S. selected print media would build anarchy between minority and majority population while reporting as compared to Pakistani selected newspapers.

3.Methodology

In this study an orderly, objective and quantitative description of noticeable media content was examined by using content analysis. This study quantitatively examined the publication of selected blasphemy cases of Pakistan in three years i.e. 2009 till 2011 in Pak and US media. It focused on the nature of portrayal of Pakistan's blasphemy cases in the leading Pak newspapers *The News* and *The Nation* and the two leading US newspapers *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

3.2Population and sampling

The population for this study is the news contents which were published between the two weeks of selected blasphemy cases of Pakistan in the time period of three years i.e. from 2009 till 2011. All the news stories related to the selected blasphemy issue were analyzed. It can be said safely in convenient manner that it is a census study because the entire population was considered as a sample for the analysis. The chosen newspapers were *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The News* and *The Nation*.

3.3 Data analysis

In data analysis useful information is extracted, organized and examined from the raw data. The procedure of categorizing is the key factor to understand the extract of the available data. In this study coding technique of selected blasphemy cases was carried out in order to gather the information.

3.4 Variables

The operational definition of various selected variables of the study is as under:

3.4.1 Coverage

Print media is a form of media that includes newspapers, periodicals, magazines, books and much more. Anything we read has a great influence over our acuties in one way or another, which eventually reflects in our actions. Print media have been so far best tool for shaping public's perceptions and ideas. Researchers have found out that amount of coverage of the conflicts determines the destructive or constructive results of the dispute. Intensifying the news coverage creates more intricacy thus making the resolution tricky. The newspapers have the ability to escalate the conflict by giving more coverage.

3.4.2 Slant

Slant indicates that how the news has been reported. Media influence operates through the choice of perspective used in the coverage. It is actually the automatic twisting of news by the selection of phrasing and by emphasizing on some details over the others. This study focuses on the favorable, neutral and unfavorable slant used in the publication of the selected blasphemy cases in the US and Pak print media. The news with more negative sentences and less positive sentences are termed as unfavorable; likewise the news items with more positive and less negative sentences are termed as favorable. The neutral news items contains nearly equal amount of negative and positive sentences. For instance, Pakistan is the increasingly radicalized Muslim country. Extremist used target killing to move Pakistan towards an Islamic state. Blasphemy law often used to persecute Christians and other religious minorities. The mere fact of being Christian and Ahmadies in Pakistan makes a person vulnerable. These type of sentences are considered unfavorable slant. President Zardari condemned the recent killings of the two high officials. The silent majority of Pakistan is against extremism. Such sentences are coded as favorable. The news with objective coverage with equal amount of negative and positive sentences.

3.4.3 Frames

The frames such as atrocious or unprejudiced, criminal or victim, stereotype and anarchy between the minority and majority population used in the coverage of these cases are identified after the detailed analysis.

3.4.3.1 Blasphemy law

The debate of amending or repealing Pakistan's blasphemy law has been going on in the national and international media. There is also a strong opposition against the amendments. The group of people which are in the favor of the revision argue that the law is prejudiced and atrocious therefore it should immediately be repeal or amend, whereas the other group states that the law protects individuals sense of consecrated thus it is unprejudiced. The study finds out that whether selected newspapers depict the law as atrocious or unprejudiced.

3.4.3.2 Accused

The illegal conduct of intimidation or physical persecution against an individual or a group is termed as hate crime. A group of people asserts the charges against Salman Taseer, Asia Bibi, Shahbaz Bhatti and Gojra residents are outrageous or false whereas another group emphasize that these people have committed blasphemy. In between these extreme point of views there is another group which stresses upon a proper procedure to ascertain the truth. The framing found out that how media depicted the accused; as a victim of the hate crime or as a criminal.

3.4.3.3 Stereotype

From the scanty information gathered from the capital cities and sometimes from their own imagination, journalist (foreign and local both) fabricate the stories. The US media covers the stories about Pakistan according to the its foreign policy

which is not been very pleasant despite the fact that Pakistan is their front line ally in the war against terrorism. US media constantly stereotype Muslims and Islam for different motives.

3.4.3.4 Anarchy between minority and majority population

The escalating number of issues like blasphemy is a challenge for media that how they portrays the concern. The insensitive reporting of reactive issues may results in havoc between the minority and majority population.

Findings

Following are the results of the content analysis of two Pakistan`s newspapers, The News and The Nation, and two US newspapers New York Times and Washington Post.

Table 4.1: US & Pakistani Newspapers Coverage given to Blasphemy Cases:

Cases	The News	The Nation	New York Times	Washington Post
Shahbaz Bhatti	67	33	5	4
Salman Taseer	94	66	9	5
Asia Bibi	27	17	3	2
Gojra Killing	37	31	2	1
Total	225	147	19	12
Sum Total		372		31

It was also found, as indicated in the table that on the whole 372 news items regarding four categories appeared in the both Pakistani newspapers, of which 225 news published in daily News whereas 147 appeared in daily Nation. Moreover the result also show that most of the news were published about killing of Salman Taseer, then Governor of Punjab. The data of the table indicates that 31 news items on the cumulative basis, of which 19 and 12 news stories about the issue were published in New York Times and Washington Post respectively.

Portrayal of the Blasphemy cases in the U.S and Pakistani print media: A content analysis of the selected Blasphemy cases from 2009 to 2011 in New York Times, Washington Post, the news and the Nation

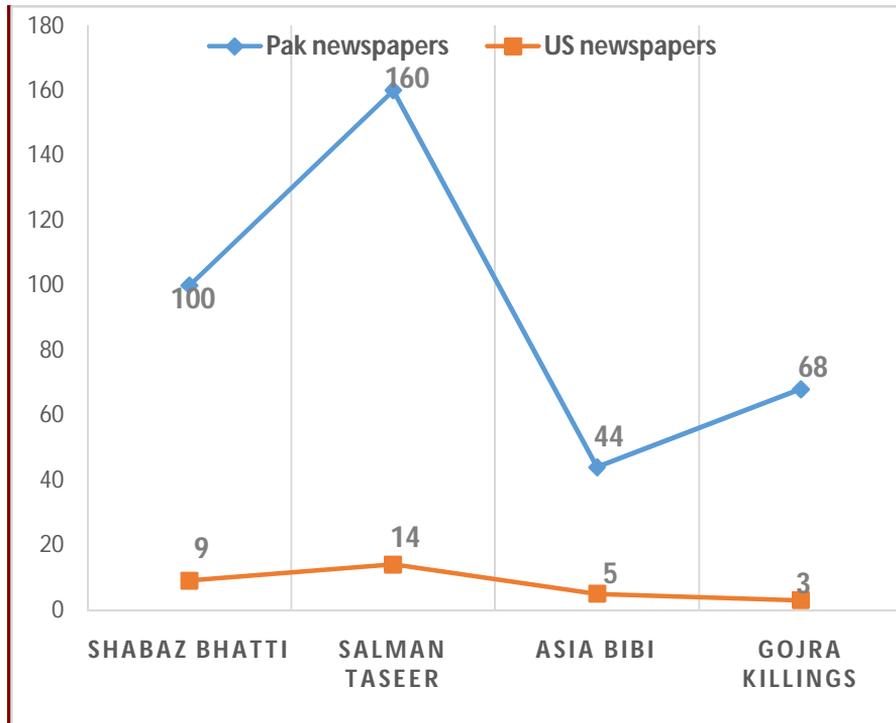


Fig 1: Graph showing comparison of coverage between Pak and US newspapers

Table 4.2. Pakistani Newspapers Slant:

Cases	The News			The Nation		
	favorabl e	neutra l	Unfavorabl e	Favorabl e	neutra l	unfavorabl e
Shahba z Bhatti	7	37	23	10	17	6
Salman Taseer	24	37	33	21	29	16
Asia Bibi	6	12	9	5	8	4
Gojra Killing	3	10	24	18	8	5
Total	40	96	89	54	62	31

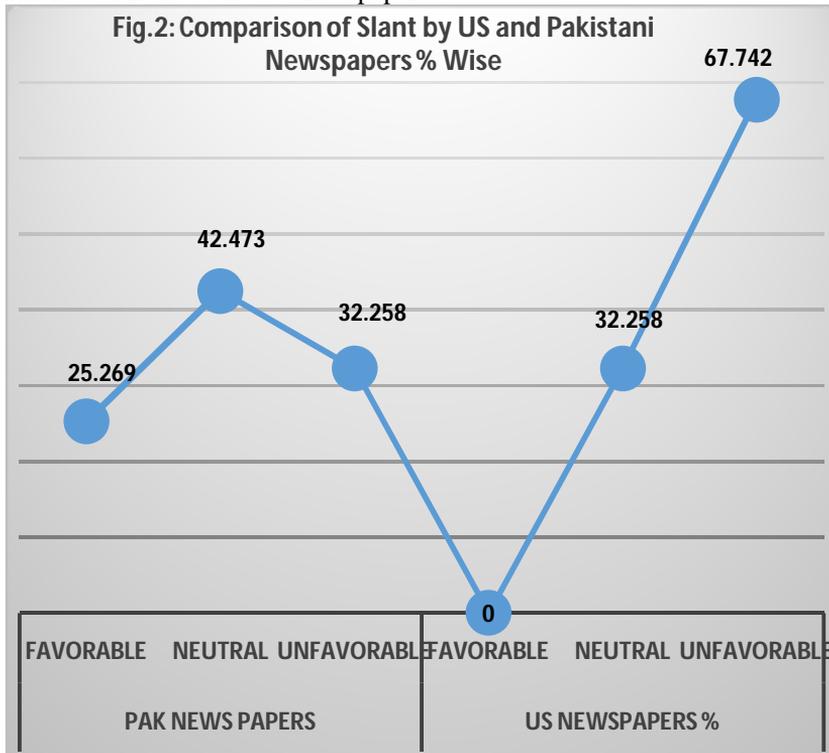
The data of the content analysis of the issue in the both Pakistani English dailies divulge that the ratio/number of favorable news items was found greater in daily Nation (54) in comparison of daily News (40). Whereas it was also found that total

number of unfavorable news items of the Four categories was greater in daily News (89) as compared to daily Nation (31).

4.3. US newspapers Slant:

Cases	New York Times			Washington Post		
	Favorable	neutral	Unfavorable	Favorable	neutral	unfavorable
Shahbaz Bhatti	0	0	5	0	1	3
Salman Taseer	0	3	6	0	2	3
Asia Bibi	0	2	1	0	2	0
Gojra Killing	0	0	2	0	0	1
Total	0	5	14	0	5	7

The result of the study depicts that ratio of unfavorable news items was found overwhelmingly greater (21 out of 31 news stories) in the both the U.S. newspapers in comparison of the other two categories i.e. favorable and neutral. Like the both Pakistani newspapers, the most of the news items were appeared about killing of Salman Taseer in the both U.S. newspapers.



The data of this comparative graphs about slant highlight in lucid manner that the ratio in percentile of unfavorable news items of the issue was 32.258 and 67.742 in the both Pakistani and the U.S. newspapers respectively. The result also divulges that the ratio of favorable news was zero percent in the U.S. papers while it was 25.269 in the both Pakistani newspapers.

Table 4.4 Pakistani Newspapers frame Regarding “Blasphemy Law”:

The data of the table indicates that number of the news of the variable “blasphemy

Cases	The News		The Nation	
	atrocious	unprejudiced	Atrocious	unprejudiced
Shahbaz Bhatti	5	1	1	1
Salman Taseer	24	10	7	14
Asia Bibi	8	6	4	7
Gojra Killing	14	0	1	1
Total	51	17	13	23

law “with attribute/frame of atrocious was found greater in daily News (51) as compared to daily Nation (13).

Table 4.5 Pakistani Newspapers frame Regarding “Accused”:

Cases	The News		The Nation	
	criminal	victim	criminal	victim
ShahbazBhatti	0	62	0	31
Salman Taseer	6	62	8	37
Asia Bibi	6	14	5	8
Gojra Killing	36	0	0	28
Total	48	138	13	104

The data of the table in light of another frame “accused” communicates that overwhelmingly news stories portrayed it as a frame of “victim” ,as it was found that number of news items with this context were 138 and 104 in daily News and daily Nation respectively.

Table 4.6 Pakistani Newspapers frame Regarding “Stereotype”:

Cases	The News	The Nation
	stereotype	stereotype
Shahbaz Bhatti	20	3
Salman Taseer	25	15
Asia Bibi	5	0
Gojra Killing	3	5
Total	53	23

The result of the frame “stereotype “indicates that total number of news items with this attribute were 53 and 23 in daily News and daily Nation respectively.

Table 4.7 Pakistani Newspapers frame Regarding “Anarchy”:

Cases	The News	The Nation
	Anarchy between minority and majority population	Anarchy between minority and majority population
Shahbaz Bhatti	10	2
Salman Taseer	12	4
Asia Bibi	4	2
Gojra Killing	18	3
Total	44	11

The result of the frame “Anarchy between minority and majority population “ reflects that significant number of difference was found in daily News (44) as compared to daily Nation (11).

Table 4.8 US Newspapers Frames regarding “Blasphemy law”:

Cases	New York Times		Washington Post	
	atrocious	unprejudiced	Atrocious	unprejudiced
Shahbaz Bhatti	5	0	4	0
Salman Taseer	9	0	4	0
Asia Bibi	0	0	1	0
Gojra Killing	2	0	0	0

Total	16	0	9	0
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The result of the frame “blasphemy law “depicts that the both the U.S. newspapers describe it as an atrocious law.

Table 4.9 US Newspapers Frames regarding “Accused”:

Cases	New York Times		Washington Post	
	criminal	victim	criminal	victim
Shahbaz Bhatti	0	4	0	4
Salman Taseer	0	8	0	4
Asia Bibi	0	1	0	1
Gojra Killing	0	2	0	1
Total	0	15	0	10

The table about the frame “accused “ tells the readers that the both the U.S. newspapers portrayed the frame as a victim ,as it was found that number of news items with this context were 15 and 10 in New York Times and Washington Post respectively.

Table 4.10 US Newspapers Frames regarding “stereotype”:

Cases	New York Times	Washington Post
	Stereotype	Stereotype
Shahbaz Bhatti	3	2
Salman Taseer	4	4
Asia Bibi	2	1
Gojra killings	1	1
Total	10	8

The data of the table about the result of the frame “stereotype “describes that the number of news items with this tag were 10 and 8 inNew York Times and Washington Post respectively.

Table 4.11 US Newspapers Frames regarding “Anarchy”:

Cases	New York Times	Washington Post
	Anarchy between minority and majority population	Anarchy between minority and majority population
Shahbaz Bhatti	4	1
Salman Taseer	5	3
Asia Bibi	2	2
Gojra killings	2	1
Total	13	7

The result of the frame “Anarchy between minority and majority population “ indicates that the both the U.S. newspapers used the attribute in negative sense in 13 and 7 news items in New York Times and Washington Post respectively.

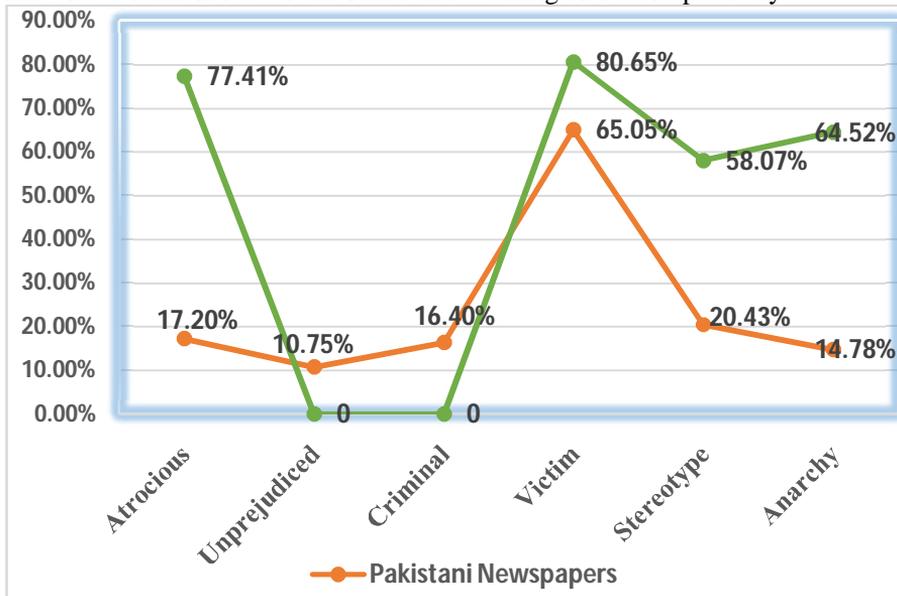


Fig 3: Graph showing comparison of framing between Pak and US newspapers in %

The result of the graph of framing between Pak and US newspapers communicates in vivid and lucid manner that the ratio of the frames with attributes “victim ”atrocious

“stereotype “ and “anarchy between minority and majority population “ was found greater in the both the U.S. newspapers as compared to the both Pakistani newspapers.

Hypotheses Testing:

The study presented the content analysis of 358 news items about the blasphemy issue appeared in the U.S. and Pakistani newspapers. The sample comprised of 327 news stories from Pakistan newspapers out of which 225 were from *The News* and 147 were from *The Nation*. Likewise 31 news stories were from US newspapers, with 19 from New York Times and 12 from Washington Post. The test for the hypotheses is given below.

The *first* hypothesis stated that Pakistani selected print media would give greater coverage to issue than the U.S. selected print media. The hypothesis was supported; It was found that Pak newspapers had 372 news items, 225 from *the News* and 147 from *the Nation* (including hard news, feature, editorials and articles) whereas US print media had 31 news items, 19 from New York Times and 12 from Washington Post . The *second* hypothesis predicted that there would be significant difference between slanting of blasphemy cases by Pak and US print media. The overall result of the study indicated that in the selected Pakistani newspapers 25.269% news items were favorable whereas the selected U.S. newspapers had no favorable slant while reporting the blasphemy news. Similarly, Pak newspapers had 42.473% neutral and 32.258% unfavorable slant, while US newspapers had 32.258% neutral and 67.741% unfavorable slant. In the light of above-mentioned findings it is concluded that the second hypothesis was also supported.

The *third* hypothesis stated that Pakistani selected newspapers would give more favorable and less unfavorable coverage to the issues as compared to the U.S. selected newspapers. This hypothesis was too supported as the findings of the study highlight that the ratio of favorable coverage was found greater in the selected Pakistani newspapers as compared to the U.S. newspapers. The selected Pakistani newspapers had 25.269% news with favorable slant whereas there was no single news with favorable slant in the U.S. newspapers. Similarly the ratio of unfavorable coverage was observed more in the U.S. newspapers as compared to the Pakistani newspapers, as the result shows the selected Pakistani had 32.258% news with unfavorable slant, while on the other hand in the US newspapers the ratio of the news with unfavorable slant was 67.7419%. The ratio of unfavorable slant, however, was also found greater as compared to the favorable slant in the both Pakistani selected English language newspapers.

The *fourth* hypothesis predicted that the U.S. selected print media would describe the blasphemy law as atrocious law as compared to Pakistan selected newspapers which would state the law as unprejudiced. The overall results of the study communicate that the US. Newspapers stated more the blasphemy law as atrocious in comparison of the selected Pak newspapers. As the findings show that 77.419% news reported blasphemy law as atrocious in US newspapers, whereas merely 17.204% news items stated the law as atrocious and whereas 10.753% stated the law as unprejudiced by the Pakistani newspapers .It is pertinent to mention here

that not a single news story in the US. Newspapers portrayed the blasphemy law as unprejudiced. Hence in the light of the result it can be sum up, the hypothesis was supported

The *fifth* hypothesis stated that the U.S. print media would generally depict the accused as the victim of the hate crime. The hypothesis was also supported as 80.645% news items depicted the accused as the victim. The *sixth* hypothesis predicted that Pakistani selected print media would generally portray the accused as a criminal. It is significant to mention here that most of the news items described the accused as victim instead of the tag of criminal. As the results depict that the selected Pakistani print media had 65.054% news portraying the accused as victim whereas 16.398% as criminal. In the light of above-mentioned findings it is concluded in convenient manner that the hypothesis was rejected.

The *seventh* hypothesis stated that the U.S. selected newspapers would more likely stereotype the whole nation due to the actions of one group as compared to the selected Pakistani print media. This hypothesis was supported since 58.065% news items in US newspapers used stereotype approach while reporting. Whereas only 23.241% news had stereotypes out of total 372 news items in the selected Pakistani newspapers, therefore this hypothesis was supported. The *eight* hypothesis predicted that it is more likely that the U.S. selected print media would build anarchy between minority and majority population while reporting as compared to Pakistani selected newspapers. It was found that the most of the news items in the U.S. media tried to build between minority and majority population in comparison of the selected Pak newspapers. As the findings communicate in crystal manner that 64.516% news items used this approach in American newspapers while the ratio of such news was observed merely 14.785% in the Pakistani newspapers. In the light of above-mentioned findings it is concluded that the hypothesis was also supported.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Muslims and non-Muslims lives with harmony in Pakistan for generations. Irrespective of the religious differences all religions show tolerance towards each other's sacred believes. Quaid-e-Azam firmly believed in religious accord. He always stressed upon giving equal rights and care for the minorities. He said "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of State. Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense... but in political sense."

According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973(chapter1 fundamental rights): All citizens are equal before the law. Every citizen has the right to practice and propagate his/her religion. Every sect has the right to establish and maintains religious institutions. No person is required to pay extra tax on the basis of his/her faith. A group of people laid an accusation that the blasphemy law persecutes the minorities in the country, but no one has so far been actually hanged under this law. Out of total, two third of the cases were occurred in Punjab in which majority prisoners were Muslims. Actions had been taken against

Christians, Ahmadies and Muslims other than no Hindu, Sikh, Parsi or Buddhists has been so far tried under the law. Government of Pakistan, civil society, religious scholars and general public strongly condemned Shahbaz Bhatti's murder. Similar standpoint was observed in Salman Taseer case but with noticeably lesser intensity. This could be because of his political disposition. Gojra killings were castigated nationally and internationally by the majority of Muslim community.

In view of the authors, after the scrupulous appraisal of the blasphemy cases is, Salman Taseer stance was inaccurate as well as Qadri's approach, both of them contravened the laws. Salman Taseer by publically challenging court's decision while the case was in the process. He could have taken the case in the higher court if he was in opposition to the verdict. Qadri committed a breach by taking the law in his hands and assassinating a person. Thus the element of extremism was on both sides. While reading different opinion writings, editorials and articles it seemed that everyone had formed their own two inches mosque and were least bothered about the prevailing intolerance in the society. The liberal class accuse the others as barbaric and fanatics whereas they themselves are accused of being western agents and "non-believers, *"La deen"*.

During the research, the matter was discussed with many well-read people as well as the public and it was observed and explored an aspect of ignorance on both sides (the liberal and the non-liberal). The people with modern education had less or no understanding of Islamic laws and their implementation. On the other hand, the religious scholars due to lack of facilities were deprived of contemporary education. Hence both the groups were not willing to understand and to accept point of view of each other on the blasphemy issue. Western and local liberal media is stressing upon changing *shariah* law asserting that these laws are atrocious and outraged. However, the problem does not lie in the laws but the erroneous implication. In fact *Shariah* laws are well constructed and practical. We can take the example of Saudi Arabia despite of being accused of having most conservative laws in practice Saudi Arabia has one of the lowest crime rate.

On 3rd march 2011, everyone was stunned on Shahbaz Bhatti's slaying by two unknown bikers. Immediately after the incident Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan took the responsibility of the killing. The pamphlet thrown on the road by the killers had KalmaTayyaba and Prophet's (SAW) name written on it. No Muslim can ever think of throwing a paper like that on the road. Uproar by national and international media and political point scoring apart, the judgment made in Asia Bibi case by the district court Nankana Sahib claimed to be on legal grounds, relied on the statement of six witnesses. President bar association Nankana Sahib said, everyone had started proving her innocent without knowing the actual facts. And if she was innocent and was not satisfied with the decision then she had the right to opt defensive evidence or took her case to the higher courts of the country.

There is a huge hue and cry for repealing or amending the law and pardoning the blasphemers by the human right activists nationally and internationally. It's true that occasionally quite a few blameless individuals faced the anguish, but repealing or making changes in the law is not a definitive solution. If

someone argues the blasphemy law should be abolished because of the misuse then he must revisit his assessment, because it's like forgiving all criminals in fear of making wrong judgments. Pardoning Asia Bibi will not solve the problem when there are many other who are not so fortunate to receive media publicity will stay ignored. Everyone has the fundamental right to freedom of expression which includes freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart information and ideas. However this right to freedom of expression is not absolute. Freedom comes with responsibility, the restrictions prescribed by the law while practicing the right of liberty is necessary in order to maintain peace in the society.

5.2 Conclusion

Blasphemy had been an important topic since last couple of years. A lot had been written and spoken by media channels and people from all walks of life. No doubt that there were incidents where minorities did suffer but so as the case with majorities. Pakistan is facing most dreadful time in the history; the condition has worsened due to the war on terrorism and incessant natural disasters. Public is facing tremendous power shortage and food crises and in this scenario the emotions get high when any news breaks about blasphemy. Salman Taseer murder was the result of high notion of disappointment. The extreme distrust in the legal system of the country and the failure of government to provide fundamental rights to the citizens is rooting hopelessness. Unlike AsiBibi's case and Salman Taseer assassination where Qadri was portrayed as a hero by some of the religious parties, Shahbaz Bhatti's murder and Gojra riots were strongly deprecated by the majority population. Not a single news story in Pak and US newspapers depicted Shahbaz Bhatti as a criminal. This shows that Salman Taseer was not liked by the majority of the country due to his reckless political stances on sensitive matters.

The results confirm Duggan, Martinelli, Neelamalar and Chitra approaches that media influence public opinion by not only suppressing the information but also by the choice of perspective, in addition media sensationalize the conflict thus makes the resolution difficult. The study is also aligned with Ackson and Hansen research that media frequently use stereotypes while reporting especially when direct contact is lacking which results in social injustice for the societies.

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