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Exploring Media Narratives: A Qualitative Study of the Hijab Ban Coverage in Indian News Channels

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Abstract

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Exploring Media Narratives: A Qualitative Study of the Hijab Ban Coverage in Indian News Channels

Abstract

Muskan Khan, a hijab-wearing Muslim student, was chased and intimidated by the majority of Hindu students of her college, but she refused to be cowed down raising the slogan Allah o Akbar. The incident gained international fame and she was given the title of hijab girl. Indian TV channels, The Republic World, Time Now, NDTV, and India Today, covered the incident. In this qualitative research, the researchers analyzed hijab coverage in current events and TV shows on the said TV channels. The findings revealed that the Indian Muslim minority was demonized in the media, and TV news programs in the country aired anti-hijab programming, equating the head covering with terrorism. The Indian news channel anchors and guests exaggerated, fabricated, and twisted the on-air content to create hatred against the hijab and Islam. They subtly showed their anti-Muslim political leanings in the content they produced and blamed Islam for the adversity.

Keywords:

Hijab, Veil, Islamophobia, Indian Muslims, Hijab and Terrorism

Contents

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Introduction

The hijab is worn for various reasons, including religious, social, political, and economic (Kandiyoti, 1987). When the hijab was first worn in pre-Islamic Arabia, it was seen as a mark of a woman's rank and was worn by the elite in early Islam (Hoodfar, 1992). The term hijab is derived from the Arabic word Hijaba which means covering (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). Muslim women wear the face-covering niqab. A liberal hijab consists of a headscarf that may or may not cover the front hair with clothing that does not reveal the body shape or forearm (Pazhoohi & Burriss, 2015). Proponents and detractors alike have used the veil to their advantage. After 9/11, the debate on hijab increased particularly for unfavorable reasons (Everett et al., 2014).

The current hijab dispute in Karnataka did not originate in the state. It has been brewing for the past over twenty years. Historically, women would wear burqa or niqab but after September 11, 2001, the seeds were planted for Islamophobia. The United States' "war on terror" fostered prejudices against Muslims and they were subjected to hostility and surveillance, mistrust and suspicion, and were

required to answer awkward inquiries on their beliefs. World Hijab Day is observed on 1st February every year with the efforts of Nazma Khan, a Bangladeshi-born American citizen, as she donned a hijab to school and students referred to her as Batman and Ninja (Khan, 2022). The hijab is also linked to terrorism thus connected to Islamophobia. Islamophobia goes beyond a simple fear or hatred of Muslims. In Julianne Hammer's words, it is an intellectual construct that is formed and repeated for ideological, political, manipulation, and religious objectives (Hammer, 2013) and is a bigotry faced by Muslims (Allen, 2010). Therefore, by investigating Islamophobia, it may be understood from a variety of perspectives. In the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan made the case that the West and Western leadership were a failure in stopping Islamophobia. He also highlighted that Muslims wearing hijab suffer as the headscarf is perceived as incompatible with Western ideas of freedom. The West which doesn't allow Muslim women to wear hijab, permits all its women to wear anything they choose. He disentangled the power dynamics at play in Western ideas of freedom, which served to reinforce and sustain Islamophobia (Javaid et al., 2022).

Approximately 200 million Muslims reside in India, constituting the largest minority community in the primarily Hindu-dominated country. Muslim populations have endured bias in many spheres and are particularly affected by intergroup violence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ruling BJP attempted to curtail the rights of Muslims through the Citizenship Amendment Act, which expedites the naturalization process for non-Muslim immigrants from adjacent nations (Maizland, 2024). Muskaan Khan has unintentionally become the face of opposition for young Indian Muslim women in the growing debate over hijab or headscarf. A video shows a mob of boys surrounding the 19-year-old girl as she enters her university. While donning saffron shawls, a color associated with Hinduism and Hindu nationalist parties, the boys began screaming "Jai Shri Ram," or "Victory to Lord Ram." Muskan Khan, who was wearing a headscarf, a face mask, and a long black robe, stood her ground and shouted "Allah o Akbar" in response (God is Great). The campus administrators quickly escorted her inside. She told the BBC that she wanted to defend her basic rights (Qureshi, 2022).

Taking the Muskan Khan incident as a case, researchers are interested in studying Indian media's take on the hijab prohibition during the Maskan Khan case and also want to analyze how Indian media marginalized Muslims during and after the Muskan Khan incident through anti-Muslimism propaganda. Based on these objectives here are three RQs of the study.

1. How do the Indian news TV channels cover hijab issues?
2. Does the presentation of hijab, Muslims, and Islam have any particular connotations?
3. How did the Indian media marginalize the Indian Muslims by using this hijab issue?

Answering these questions, this research highlights the basic human rights of Indian Muslims, enabling them to spend their lives by their religion. This study helps understand media propaganda and provides guidelines for the general public regarding media awareness and literacy. It also underlines that due to hijab, Indian media is spreading misinformation about Muslim minorities. This study exposes the hate content against Muslims.

India is home to people of many different ethnicities, linguistic groups, and religious traditions. Muslims, mainly Sunnis, are one-fifth of the total population. Diversity within the nation's Muslim groups may be seen in language, social caste, ethnic background, and access to political and economic power (Maizland, 2024). According to Kirmani (2016), Muslims constitute 14.4 percent of India's overall population, making them the largest minority in the country. Approximately 200 million Muslims inhabit India. We must never term Indian Muslims a minority because India has the third largest Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan.

The partition of Pakistan and India in 1947 witnessed various incidents of barbarity. Fundamentalist Hindus repeated the same by attacking Babri Masjid, a 16th-century Muslim monument in Ayodhya, on December 6, 1992, and turned it into Ram Mandir recently. The Babri Mosque tragedy caused problems for the Indian authorities as it gave rise to the discussion of Muslim identity (Narayan, 2012). Muslims in India are subjected to constant discrimination and are denied any legal protections or privileges. According to experts, anti-Muslim views have been intensified under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. The ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda against the Muslims since its general election victory in 2014, which was increased after the general election of 2019. The activities have prompted demonstrations in India and have been denounced internationally (Jabeen, 2017).

Islamophobia in India

In the modern era, a conversation in the "public sphere" is not seen to have reached its full potential until it has addressed the part that the media plays in conveying the citizens' concerns. The media framing of any phenomenon is very important in this media age. As far as the presentation of the Muslim community in Indian media is concerned, they are frequently portrayed negatively (Kumar, 2011). This anti-Muslim agenda is not restricted to the negative portrayal of Muslims but also reaches the Islamophobic practices by Hindus. In May 2022, BJP officials commented disrespectfully about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Maizland, 2024).

There has been a rise in the number of hate crimes against Muslims in India. Islamophobia has always been a major component of the ideology of Hindu nationalist movements in India. Established in 1925, the Hindu nationalist paramilitary organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has led the campaign of making India a Hindu land. RSS founder and first chief Keshav Baliram Hedgewar said that Hindu culture is like breath for India to stay alive. When Muslims opposed this ideology to justify their presence in the country with their own culture, RSS officials tagged Muslims as arrogant and disrespectful. In 1929, Hegdeward's successor Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, a Nazi Germany sympathizer, argued that Muslim culture was incompatible with Indian culture because Islam was initiated in a dry region (Sen, 2022). This culture of intimidation persists to this day, as Hindu supremacist groups often coerce Muslim meat merchants into closing their businesses around Hindu holidays.

A meme propagating the concept of "corona jihad" was spread by the proponents of Hindu nationalism. It is important to remember that ever since the beginning of the pandemic, religious meetings all over the world invited criticism. A community service that took place in February at an evangelical church in Mulhouse, east of France,

became one of the primary sources of infection that contributed to the virus's spread throughout the country (McAuley, 2020) but in India, Indian Tablighi Jamaat congregation became the ultimate target for the Hindutva agenda of the BJP. Members of the ruling BJP, including Shobha Karandlaje, made racial remarks about the gathering by calling it "Corona Jihad" (Karandlaje, 2020). That prevailing situation stigmatized the Indian Muslims (Ghosal et al., 2020).

On a technological level, the development and distribution of racist content on social media platforms in India was unsettling and potentially dangerous. After the 2018 anti-Muslim riots in Kandy, Sri Lanka, it was thought that abundant incendiary information on Facebook contributed to the outbreak of the deadly violence (Nazeer, 2018). Although the hashtags 'Corona Jihad' and 'Corona Terrorism' were created by the BJP and RSS, Sinhala nationalist parties have used them to promote similar allegations about the local Muslim population. India's current leading political party, the BJP, is notorious for its right-wing attacks against minorities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the party's pride, is a fervent Hindu who believes that India can only achieve greatness by becoming more homogeneous, a sentiment that is increasingly shared across. Hindu activist groups in Karnataka think that the hijab ban is necessary for social equality and for establishing an impartial learning environment for all students. For religious equality in education, Hindu student activists consider the hijab as a symbol of the subjugation of Muslim females and wish to remove them. In addition, they relate hijab to a saffron shawl that Hindus frequently don during religious rites. If hijabs are permitted, then every Hindu should be permitted to wear a saffron shawl in the classroom as well (Mudium, 2022).

Agenda Setting

This theory contends that the media may not teach us what to think, but the media does tell us what to think about. Because the media cannot tell us what to think, it is unable to impose its will on our perspectives on any given topic (Baran, 2014). This theory was proposed in the context of politics, especially American presidential elections in 1968. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), public opinion about a candidate is heavily influenced by

how the media portrays them. During an election year, when the media plays an important role in spreading information and forming public opinion, the topic of who has power over the media takes on extra importance (Kim et al, 2017). Since its inception in 1968, the Agenda Setting Theory has been a powerful tool for influencing public policy. The agenda-setting schema postulates that the mass media shapes public perception regarding the significance of social issues and realities by prioritizing certain issues and realities over others, thereby giving them more space and focus. This, in turn, influences how people perceive the significance of those issues and realities. It is generally agreed that the level of public comprehension of social reality is the single most critical factor in determining the extent to which the media exerts its influence inside a community (Bagdikian, 1985). The media determines the priorities of their news programming based on the information-seeking behavior of society. In a nutshell, there is a reciprocity between the people's agenda of information seeking and the media agenda of information delivery, and this is especially the case because of the socio-economic dynamics of the market and the public sphere. On the other hand, this relationship cannot be said to be everlasting because it changes depending on the circumstances. The pattern of this mutual influence is influenced by a somewhat large number of other variables that intervene. The relevance of these other factors pales in comparison to those of community and race. Because of its position of privileged leadership and the pervasive standards of professional journalism, a medium has the potential to influence the agendas of other media (McCombs, 2005).

It's no secret that the media has played an essential role in spreading anti-minority sentiments among white Americans for decades. In the United States, this pattern continues to be a problem for Muslims (Byng, 2008). India, the largest democracy has never investigated these consequences. It is clear from a review of the political coverage in the Indian press and the election campaigns of the major parties that political players and the media are frequently at odds with one another. A watchful press is essential to democracies. Voters can better make informed decisions when parties and candidates are covered in the media. Who has sway over the media? Both in the United States and

Europe, election coverage in the media and party campaigns are interrelated and mutually affect one another. This study investigates whether party campaigns or the media are responsible for setting the election agenda in India. The political system in India is modeled after the Western political system, and it contains a media environment that is highly competitive, diversified, and non-consolidated. There are both formal and informal linkages between the media, business interests, and political actors. The attention of the press and the major parties was focused on Narendra Modi of the BJP. In our opinion, this has something to do with the political climate in India. There may be a trade-off between the negotiation of political power and the maintenance of a balanced press according to the substantial correlations and non-significant causal effects (Baumann et al., 2017).

Functional Perspective of Minority Media

The second foundation of this research is the functional perspective of minority media that Viswanath and Arora (2000) conceived of and refined. It is a notion connected to the reasons why people watch or listen to mass media. Researchers identified five functions that are believed to be the basis for investigating the motivations of minority audience members, which are the subject of this study. (1) Informational (2) The transmission of cultures (3) A contributor to the community (4) Sentinel's role in the process (Warning against threats to the community) (5) The function of assimilation. The primary purpose is informative, and it emphasizes delivering information about the community, with a particular focus on developments that are taking place in a variety of geographical areas and settings, spanning from the local to the global. The purpose of the minority press is to play an important role in the process of cultural transmission by reporting on cultural aspects that are specific to the particular community, such as celebrations, ceremonies, and other events that take place in the community, in addition to more personal aspects of ethnic culture that need to be revived, preserved, and passed down from generation to generation. Another responsibility of the minority press is to act as a community booster by encouraging people to become involved in the community and cultivating a constructive attitude toward the community. As a part of this function,

minority press organizations tend to cover such uplifting components as individuals' or groups' achievements, good responses from mainstreamed sections and governments, and other such topics. The socio-economic position of the readers and the social milieu in which the press operates, have a role in determining the degree to which the press serves as a sentinel. When the majority of people's responses to the community's social behaviors are more violent, the sentinel role of the community media becomes more intense. The term "assimilation function" refers to the tendency of a community to conform to its way of life, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to the local traditional ways of life or to the mainstream way of life. Again, in analyzing the role of the press in communities with a significant minority population, they presented two crucial arguments. They argue that this will increase based on many characteristics such as ethnicity, class, occupation, mother tongue, and so on. They emphasize that the complexity and heterogeneity within the minority will increase as a result of these various aspects. In a similar vein, they suggest that the press of minority groups serves as an instrument of social control (Viswanath & Arora, 2000).

Methodology

Content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, pp. 2–14). Qualitative content analysis is a method of research used to look at the content of data in a way other than numbers. Qualitative content analysis was used to get a good look at the content. In media studies, qualitative content analysis depends a lot on how researchers "observe" and understand media. One reason why a lot of qualitative content analysis hasn't been done is because of how detailed and time-consuming it is. India's Muslim communities were shaken by a debate about hijab. Muslims in India have had to deal with a slew of issues. The Muslim community has come under attack since the Hijab controversy erupted, and as a result, members are afraid of one another. The content analysis method is appropriate for this study, which aims to investigate the depiction of India's Muslim population through broadcasting in English. For this research, four popular Indian English TV channels, NDTV, India Today, Republic World, and Time Now were selected to investigate how hijab, Islam, and Muslims were portrayed in the media. The level of their popularity was determined by their viewership and subscribers on official YouTube channels. There was a lot of discussion about the wearing of hijabs by members of Muslim minorities. These cases were chosen based on the media attention they received and the level of public debate they sparked. Astonishingly, the jargon utilized in these scenarios had filtered into everyday speech.

For this research, the television channels were watched from February 2022 to April 2022. The four most popular English-language news channels in India were selected based on their high viewership and subscribers (see Table 1).

Table 1

English Channel Names and their YouTube Subscribers

Channel Name (English)	Subscribers (YouTube)
NDTV	11.7 million
India Today	6.01 million
Republic World	5.31 million
Time Now	2.51 million

This researcher selected the top four Indian English news channels to research how Islam and Muslims were portrayed by millions of subscribers. Then he looked at the current affairs program about the Muskan Khan case on four channels to find major flaws in the portrayal. This research's population is all four English news channels namely NDTV, India Today, Republic World, and Time Now. Between February 2022 and March 2022 Indian Muslims were discussed on television. The Hijab debate was one of the issues that stood out. The study probes how jargon from these instances had infiltrated popular culture, and how the media has covered the Muskan Khan incident. The researchers used the observation data collection technique to collect relevant data from the official YouTube channels of Indian news.

Data is collected from official YouTube channels. The selected channels have millions of subscribers and viewers. In the digital era, data from the mainstream media is mostly available online, especially on YouTube's official channels.

Data Analysis Methods

The researchers transcribe the Indian news channels' current affairs about the case of the Muskan Khan Hijab incident. Furthermore, they generated codes, subthemes, and themes and then interpreted them. The following Indian news channel's current affairs programs were transcribed from official YouTube channels:

- The Debate with Arnab Goswami, 44,607 views, February 9, 2022, Republic World, 5.44M subscribers, program duration is 53:36 minutes, anchor name is Arnab Goswami.
- News Today, 53,862 views, February 8, 2022, India Today, 6.31M subscribers, program

duration: 43:43, anchor's name is Rajdeeb Sardeasi.
- Left, Right & Centre, 10,971 views, March 15, 2022, NDTV,12M subscribers, program duration: 27:50 minutes, anchor's name is Vishnu Som.
- The Newshour9, Times Now 2.51M subscribers, program duration: 26:03 minutes, anchor name is Navika Kumar.

The purpose of content analysis, as a research method, is to determine the existence of particular words, themes, or concepts in a specific set of qualitative data. Researchers can measure and assess the existence of specific words, themes, or concepts by using content analysis. This analysis can also be used to study the links between these themes. Hence, a qualitative study was chosen for the current investigation.

Analysis and Findings

Table 2

Main Categories, Codes & Examples from Indian News Channels Current Affairs Programs

Major Category	Sub Categories /Codes	Examples
Political Polarization & Hijab	▪ Hijab ▪ Controversy ▪ Political Issue ▪ Election Issues and Political Parties ▪ Critical religious ▪ Practice ▪ Opposition parties	▪ Most political parties have made the hijab controversy the number one election issue. ▪ (Republic World) ▪ The latest lie is that the BJP government has banned hijab. ▪ (Republic World)
Indian media against religious freedom	▪ Indian media against hijab ▪ Hatred against hijab ▪ Uniform issue ▪ Community collective rights ▪ Burqa or hijab and modern society ▪ Buddhist dress ▪ Hindu dress ▪ Schooling system	▪ The issue is about uniforms, and not about religious practice, creating a sense of camaraderie, why do you want to spoil this? (Republic World) ▪ This issue is brand new, these girls were not wearing hijab before this, and it is these girls who have started this new practice (India Today)
Hijabophobia in India	▪ Symbols of religion ▪ Hijab is flag of Jamaat-I- Islami	▪ The dress of every student should symbolize their religion. Why? (Republic World)

Major Category	Sub Categories /Codes	Examples
Indian Media Targeting Muslim Religious Affairs.	▪ Hijab and Arabs ▪ Triple Talaq ▪ Nikah e Halala ▪ Muslim women's rights ▪ fundamental right	▪ The hijab is the flag of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-i-Islami (Republic World). ▪ The Quran does not mention the word head or hair (Republic World). ▪ Triple talaq and nikah halala can be termed essential religious practices. (Republic World) ▪ It is the right of a Muslim woman to decide whether her husband can say talaq talaq talaq and tell her to get out of the house which was the Muslim woman's right then (Republic World).
Indian Media Link Terrorism with Hijab	▪ Taliban, ▪ Al Qaida ▪ Terror ▪ Organizations ▪ Muskan Face of Hijab Protest ▪ Hijab & Al Qaida	▪ Pakistan is a supporter of the Taliban. I think all of these guys should go to Pakistan. They are desperate to go to Pakistan (Republic World). ▪ Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Chief of Al Qaeda, sang a poem in Muskan Khan's name, praising her as a 'Noblewoman of India'. Since the incident, the girl has become the face of the Hijab Protests (Time Now). ▪ They want to create another Taliban in this country (NDTV)
Indian Media Spread Hate Content against Hijab:	▪ Good or bad Muslims ▪ Difference between hijab and burqa, ▪ Sportswomen & hijab ▪ Religious institutions in sports and games ▪ Hijab and race ▪ Olympic Games and Hijab	▪ An opinion about people like us is that we are not good Muslims we are not Janati and you compare us with some uh some dirty object. (Republic World). ▪ Tell me one thing, suppose there is a young Muslim girl and she's running in a 200-meter race or a 400-meter race. Tell me are we creating a situation where she should be expected as per what you are saying essential religious practice to run a race wearing a hijab? Let's talk about how this applies in real life. (Republic World)
Society Issues for Muslim Women	▪ Socialization issues, culture, religion, Freedom in the country, and sort of public disorder	▪ I would just like to say one thing that you know school at home is the first unit of social conditioning and socialization. School is the second place where a child goes, that be free at least of the identities of culture and religion. (Republic World)

Political Polarization & Hijab

Events like the hijab controversy in Karnataka cause political polarization. Election campaigning is like competing in a game, with both sides constantly looking for ways to gain an advantage over the other. Even though the hijab controversy first erupted in Udupi, Karnataka, it became a political hot potato in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which was under election season. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi predicted a hijab-clad woman will become prime minister one day, notwithstanding the UP chief minister's remark that no woman wears a hijab by choice. The dispute over hijab extends far beyond political rhetoric into living rooms, tea cafes, and corner markets. This kind of topic can divide individuals ideologically. Some non-Muslims view hijab as a needless identity declaration on the part of some Muslims, while Muslims regard it as another occurrence that makes them feel insecure. According to Republic World,

"Most political parties have made the hijab controversy the number one election issue".

Hijab, a complicated topic in India for a long time, gained traction in political forums. In a TV program on Republic World, it was said that "The latest lie that is going around, the latest lie the BJP government has brought is a ban on hijab". Such discourse supports the BJP but as the BJP controls the Indian news media facts speak otherwise.

Indian Media Against Religious Freedom

In 2019 an investigation by India-based non-governmental organization Common Cause found that half of the police displayed anti-Muslim bias, making them less likely to intervene to stop attacks against Muslims. Analysts have also noticed widespread impunity for individuals who abuse Muslims. Cases against Hindus allegedly involved in violence against Muslims have been dropped, or their convictions reversed in recent years. Laws such as anti-conversion statutes and school-based restrictions on the wearing of headscarves are only two examples of the increasing trend of states passing legislation to limit religious freedom for Muslims.

The Indian news channels are against religious freedom and they target minorities. It was said School uniform is above religion and culture. But sometimes, people can't compromise their culture and religion. Religion and culture are always dominant in a society. If Muslims demand their rights, they are destroying the peace of the country and the education system. Muslim women want education with hijab, but according to the Indian News, their demand is against the discipline of the education system. It was said on Republic World that, "The issue is about uniforms, it's not about religious practice, create a sense of camaraderie, unity, why do you want to spoil this". The Indian news channels said that the hijab Issue means that the literacy rate will be low among Muslim girls. The channels think that Hijab Girls are responsible for the incident. According to the Indian news channels, this is a brand-new issue. These girls have started to wear the hijab. "This issue is brand new; these girls were not wearing hijab before; it is these girls who have started this new practice" (India Today). A government cannot impose any restriction on religion because it has supremacy. In every field of life, all humans are free. However, the Indian media

misguide the audience on this sensitive issue of hijab. Muslim women can't compromise on hijab. The literacy rate of Muslim girls is already low but that should not be affiliated only with wearing hijab because there might be so many other factors involved.

Hijabophobia in India

The hijab is a form of headwear consisting of a scarf or other piece of fabric. The hijab does not enshroud the wearer's face in any way, contrary to the veil, which is occasionally used as a synonym for the hijab. The hijab is not a safe choice in today's politically and socially fraught climate. A "signifier" doesn't mean anything by itself (Hoodfar, 1992). Its significance has grown to include everything from suppression of women's rights and Islamic fundamentalism as obstacles to religious equality and freedom of expression for women (Ahmed, 1992). Several authors like Hoodfar (1992), and Mernissi (1987) have shown that this is the case. Multiple recent academic works have explored the contextualized and varying (often contradictory) interpretations of the hijab among the Muslim women who wear it. Some people wear it as a spiritual gesture of adoration while others do it for cultural or social reasons, goals of control, recognition, or defiance. The Indian media started the propaganda against the hijab which is just a symbol of religion. A young woman who practices Islam wears a headscarf. We know that Islamophobia exists everywhere, from Australia to France to India and beyond. Laws that make it illegal for Muslim women to wear the hijab are a critical issue in many countries.

What Muslim women are experiencing is characterized as "gendered Islamophobia" and is the hatred we receive with our intersecting Muslim and female identities. While this worldwide vilification of hijab is occurring, we've been concurrently given misinformation regarding the acceptance of hijab and the "progression" we are making. Indian media manipulated the facts about Muslims. During news programs, they raised anti-Muslim questions and disrespected their guests in an offensive tone. The anchor asked, "The dress of every student should symbolize their religion. Why? (Republic World). The Indian media targets the history of hijab and manipulates its narrative. These lines are taken from the television news channel Republic World which

says, "Hijab today is the flag of the Muslim brotherhood and the Jamaat-i-Islami".

Guest Tariq Fateh is anti-Muslim. His ideology is very different from other Muslims. According to Tariq Fateh, the Quran does not mention the word head or hair anywhere. HE mentioned, "Quran does not mention the word head or hair" (Republic World). It asks for women to cover their bosom because in the pagan Arab, like many other African societies, the women would throw their clothes off and dance in jubilation. Our Indian and Pakistani Muslims are not aware. Indian News invited such guests to their programs who are against the actual practice of Islam and who manipulate facts about the history of Islam and hijab.

Indian Media Targeting the Muslim's Religious Affairs

The Indian media is encroaching upon Muslim affairs other than discussing the hijab issue. During the hijab controversy, the Indian media additionally discussed the Triple Talaq issue. There have been numerous favorable court judgments for Muslim women in India, but the media still choose to promote the concept that once the husband pronounces talaq, the wife's rights are terminated. Expert publications, meanwhile, give little thought to the rights that many Muslim women have fought for and won in lower courts, high courts, and even the Supreme Court. The study uncovered certain quotations directly from the Republic World news broadcast such as, "Triple talaq also you can say is the essential religious practice, nikah ie halal you can say is an essential religious practice". Indian news media manipulate and alter the truth by spreading misleading content against Muslims which is primarily not relevant to hijab. For example, on Republic World, in a program, it was said by a participant, "It is also a Muslim woman's right to decide whether her husband can say talaq talaq talaq and tell her to get out of the house. Where was the Muslim woman's right then"?

they labeled Corona as "Corona Jihad." The BJP government castigated a large religious gathering in Delhi organized by the worldwide Islamic missionary outfit Tablighi Jamaat for several weeks after the March outbreak of COVID-19. Some BJP officials labeled the meeting a "Talibani crime" and "Corona Terrorism," and the pro-government news stations and social media accused individuals who attended the assembly of spreading Corona as said in the following example, "they want to create another Taliban in this country" (NDTV).

The Indian Muslims were accused of purposefully spreading the outbreak. Similarly, the Indian media spread misconceptions about hijab, relating it to terrorist organizations. On the Republic World channel, it was said by an individual that, "Pakistan is the supporter of the Taliban. I think all of these guys should go to Pakistan. They are desperate to go to Pakistan".

When worn by Muslims, the veil has become a potent emblem of fear. Is it true that the Muslim veil symbolizes terror? Or is it just a religious statement? Professor of Criminology Irene Zempi addresses the "demonization" of the Muslim hijab. Following September 11, the Muslim veil was widely portrayed as a symbol of Islamic extremism and was targeted for widespread stigmatization in Western countries. India also wants to ban hijab, especially in schools. Same as the head cover has even been banned in certain European countries. Women who wear full burqas, hiding their identities from everyone but their husbands, are unable to participate fully in society. The statement was made via an Indian news channel called Time Now linking the hijab and hijab girl with terrorism which says, "Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Chief of Al Qaeda, sang a poem in Muskan Khan's name, praising her as a 'Noblewoman of India'. Since the incident, the girl has become the face of the hijab protests". Thus, the Indian news channels portrayed a negative image of hijab. The hijab is the symbol of Terrorism.

Indian Media Link Terrorism with Hijab

The Indian media is a contributor to the rising anti-Islamic content. During the hijab incident, they linked terms with Hijab. The Indian news media fueled the hijabophobia and Islamophobia. Earlier,

Indian Media Spread Hate Content against Hijab

Muslims have faced discrimination in India when it comes to finding a job, going to school, or finding a place to live. Many find challenges to obtaining

political power and money and lack access to healthcare and basic amenities. Moreover, individuals typically struggle to get justice after suffering prejudice, despite constitutional protections. Over the last two decades, the representation of Muslims in parliament has stagnated, after the 2019 elections, Muslims controlled barely 5 percent of seats. That's partly because of the ascent of the BJP, which, by the middle of 2022, boasted zero Muslims among its parliamentary representatives.

The Indian media quoted such examples that Indian Muslim women can't become sports persons. But the facts are to the contrary. There are so many examples of Muslim women who are good sportspersons. Afghan women's football team captain Hajar Abulfazl is one of them who is known as a tough player. People who still believe in the old stereotypes about hijab and Muslim women's weakness are being taught otherwise, like this quotation from Republic Word, "Tell me one thing. Suppose there is a young Muslim girl and she's participating in a 200-meter race or a 400-meter race. Tell me, Tara, are we creating a situation where she should be expected as per what you are saying essential religious practice to run a race wearing a hijab? Let's talk about how this applies in real life."Most people don't seem to be familiar with the history of the debate surrounding hijab and athletics. However, there have been several instances in which Muslim women who wear the traditional head covering have been banned from participating in their sport, leaving some athletes to decide whether to honor their faith by not participating or by removing the covering to compete.

Discussion and Conclusion

Narendra Modi's BJP swept the 2014 and 2019 Indian general elections. Modi is the kingpin of BJP, a political organization with conservative leanings that advocates that India, despite its many different religious communities, is at heart a Hindu state. The Indian news channels play the role of the mouthpiece of the BJP. The hijab controversy critics say India's BJP is trying to grab votes through several controversial religious laws passed in the conservative southern state of Karnataka. This includes a ban on the wearing of hijabs, sparking fears that these divisive policies could inflame

sectarian tensions more commonly in the country's north. One of India's five southern states that are governed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP is Karnataka, where hijab has lately been outlawed in classrooms. The government is considering a bill that would make religious conversions illegal (Hummel, 2022).

Indian News channels spread hijabophobia in society. They linked terrorism with hijab and targeted Muslim women. The Indian media spread hateful content about hijab, maligning the entire Muslim community. According to the National Press Trust of India, forty Muslim female students in the Udupi district of Karnataka have decided not to take the pre-university entrance tests. Because it is the conclusion of the school year, students everywhere are anxious about upcoming tests. "I am scared about my education. Exams are going on, and I don't know what to do," Sheikh explained (Anadolu Agency, 2022). Muslims are experiencing everything from social isolation to outright threats of "lynching" as a result of the event's controversial themes of beef ban and other anti-Muslim measures the BJP has championed (Rumaney & Sriram, 2021). The primary issue is that Muslims in India are portrayed negatively in the Indian media (Misra, 2015).

The Indian news channels spread hate content about hijab, showing it as the identity of the Taliban. The Indian news channel NDTV linked the hijab with the Taliban in the following words, "They want to create another Taliban in this country". Hijabophobia and Islamophobia too are being spread in America. Politicians on both sides of the veil debate have exploited the garment as a symbol. After September 11th, the argument over the hijab grew with negative consequences (Everett et al., 2014). Before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, hijab was already a topic of discussion (Aziz, 2012). Even though it has been almost 16 years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the effects of the resulting Islamophobia on the community of Muslim Americans are still being felt today (Iqbal, 2022). According to the history of Muslims in the subcontinent, Muslim women wore hijabs (Menon, 1981; Papanek, 1973) to maintain their Muslim image, but Indian news channels marginalized Muslim women's rights.

This research examined content analysis of the Indian news channels about the hijab ban, and hijab girl, a case of Muskan Khan. This incident played a

vital role in the political polarization caused by the BJP and showed how the Indian media represented the party's anti-Muslim ideology. Qualitative content analysis of four Indian news channels, including Republic World, Time Now, NDTV, and India Today was conducted. The current affairs program of the said channels about the hijab girl Muskan Khan case was selected from February to April 2022. The Indian media marginalized the Muslim minority, and Indian news channels spread hate content about hijab, linking it with terrorism to create Islamophobia in society. According to the findings of the research, Muslims face immense problems as the Indian media spread content against religious freedom, create hijabophobia, target Islamic tenets, and link terrorism with hijab. The targeting of Muslim women and their hijab is intimidating them. The Muslim girls fear the majority biased and anti-hijab Hindu community's wrath in the streets and therefore refrain from going to educational institutions. This is fast dropping their literacy rate. Thus, it is concluded that the Indian media targeted Islam and the rights it gave to Muslim women. It propagates that Muslim personal law has resulted in such "regressive" practices like hijab. Derogatory terms were used to malign Muslims and tried to demonize them by linking their practice of hijab with Jihad, Taliban, and Al Qaida recruits. The Indian media suggests a course of action for Muslim women which is against their religion like Muslim women should abandon hijab for the sake of education and also to participate in sports.

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