

STEREOTYPING OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN HOLLYWOOD MOVIES: AN ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATION

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To cite this article:

Abbas Amir, Faiz, Samza Fatima, and Muhammad Bilal. "ISLAMIC LEGAL PRINCIPLES: THEIR ROLE AS TO COMPLEMENT NOTICEABLE GAPS IN THE CODIFIED LAWS IN PAKISTAN." *The Scholar-Islamic Academic Research Journal* 6, No. 1 (March 03, 2020) P: 63–95

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.29370/siarj/issue10ar9>

Journal

The Scholar Islamic Academic Research Journal
 Vol. 6, No. 1 || January –June 2020 || P. 63-95

Publisher

Research Gateway Society

DOI:

[10.29370/siarj/issue10ar9](https://doi.org/10.29370/siarj/issue10ar9)

URL:

<https://doi.org/10.29370/siarj/issue10ar9>

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Journal homepage

www.siarj.com

Published online:

2020-05-31



**STEREOTYPING OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN HOLLYWOOD
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ABSTRACT:

Hollywood movies are very popular in most nations around the world and the viewers of these countries turn to Hollywood blockbusters for entertainment purposes. Hollywood movie images have the ability and power to allow audiences to generate thoughts, views and opinions about different social, political or ideological issues. Islam, the world's second largest religion as well as Muslims with more than a billion and half in numbers, have often been a subject of mis-representation and ridicule in the Hollywood. The current study attempted to explore the representation of various segments of Muslims in Hollywood movies. The study also tried to find out the image of Islam through the portrayal of Islamic countries in the movies. The qualitative content analysis has been used as a research design for this study. Through the technique of purposive sampling, four Hollywood movies from the year 2012 were selected for the analysis. The results indicated that all the segments of Muslims were depicted as anti-West. The representation of all the five Islamic countries was also depicted negatively in the movies. The results also revealed that life in Islamic countries was portrayed as clearly troubled rather than peaceful, and the people of Islamic countries were also shown as uncivilized citizens.

KEYWORDS: Stereotyping, Islam, Muslims, Representation, Hollywood Movies, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION:

Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity.¹ Approximately, there are 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide i.e. 23% of the world's population.² The word Islam means 'submission to the will of God'.³ The word Islam has been derived from the word 'silm' that means 'peace and submission'. Islam is a religion of peace and the core of religion is non-violence. Islam directives its followers to struggle for peace.⁴ So in broader way, Islam suggests the achievement of peace by submitting totally to the will of God.⁵ Though, the relations between Islam and the West have been critical theological and political matters in world politics from centuries.⁶ The shortest account of political Islam is that it represents, 'Islam used to a political end.' The other terms that used by the West such as 'radical Islam', 'extremist Islam', 'militant Islam', 'Islamism', 'fundamentalist Islam', and 'revolutionary Islam.' This diversity in referring to the terms points out toward many other aspects of

¹ Simmonds, David. *Believers All: A Book of Six World Religions*. Nelson Thornes, 2014, 53.

² Hackett, Conrad, and Brian J. Grim. "The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010." Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Centre, 2012.

³ Khan, Arshad. *Islam, Muslims, and America: Understanding the Basis of their Conflict*. Algora Publishing, 2003, 133.

⁴ Pal, Amitabh. *"Islam" Means Peace: Understanding the Muslim Principle of Nonviolence Today*. ABC-CLIO, 2011, 14.

⁵ Khan, Arshad. *Islam, Muslims, and America: Understanding the Basis of their Conflict*. Algora Publishing, 2003, 133.

⁶ Esposito, John L. "The Muslim Diaspora and the Islamic World." In *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*, by Shireen T. Hunter, 245-256. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002.

the political Islam which judged by the Western forces.⁷ The West don't use the expression Islam distinctly, rather they use it as a tag, a representation of vicious group.⁸

The term Islamophobia was emerged firstly in United Kingdom in the year 1997 during the Runnymede Trust Report. This report defined the term Islamophobia as, "*unfounded hostility towards Muslims and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims*".⁹ Islamophobia or the anti-Muslim sentiment can be defined as, "*the prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of the religion of Islam or Muslims*".¹⁰ The Oxford English Dictionary defines Islamophobia as, "*a hatred or fear of Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force*".¹¹ The notion of Islamophobia prevalent in the Western society is somehow the result of imprecise and unfair reporting of the West about Islam.¹² The stress of Western media that Muslims are extremists is result of notions of clash of civilization where one is not ready to acknowledge the existence of others. This clash of civilization

⁷ Knudsen, Are. "Political Islam in the Middle East." Chr. Michelsen Institute, Retrieved September 26, 2013, from <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/1548-political-islam-in-the-middle-east.pdf>.

⁸ Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

⁹ Morretta, Alison. *Islamophobia: Religious Intolerance against Muslims Today*. New York: Cavendish Square Publishing LLC, 2016, 6.

¹⁰ Arifin, Mohammad Sakib. "Quora." *Quora*. Retrieved April 6, 2017, from

<https://www.quora.com/What-exactly-is-Islamophobia>.

¹¹ Stevenson, Angus. *Oxford Dictionary of English*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 926.

¹² Christensen, Christian. "God Save Us from the Islam Cliches." *British Journalism Review* 17, no. 1 (2006): 65-70.

brings disintegration in the world. The conflict between the West and Islam has been centuries-old, and is unlikely to reduce. And this military interaction could become more hostile.¹³

The United States (US) media treatment inclines to expose Islam with regard to clash of civilizations which draws special attention to the dissimilarities among both. These dissimilarities depict with regard to culture and Islam as a religion. The study indicated that Muslims didn't consider the apprehension by means of religion, rather considered it as a political matter. This sort of biased coverage regarding Islam hurts the feelings of Muslims all over the place. Arab world is of the view that the U.S. media fully focuses on presenting Islamic countries as breeding lands of aggression and brutality.¹⁴ In comparison with other forms of media like radio and television, film is far more effective audio visual form, and has become a superior means of communication. The dictionary meaning puts a film as a series of images shown in succession, telling a story and usually shown on a cinema screens. Developed with a motion picture camera, the movie enable the viewers to see the pictures in way that looks like a real life scene framed in a movie despite of being a huge collection of blocked and still images. The word cinema is referred to as the business of simulating experiences to communicate stories, ideas and messages.

¹³ Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49.

¹⁴ Abdulla, Rasha A. "Islam, Jihad, and Terrorism in Post-9/11 Arabic Discussion Boards." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007): 1063-81.

People from all walks of life and all parts of the globe watch movies in cinemas or at homes on their television screens.¹⁵

Hollywood is the term used to describe the film industry of the United States of America (USA). Named after the small town in California where most of the film studios are located, Hollywood is the biggest film industry of the world. It is one of the greatest international entertainers to people of all ages, races, sexes, and ethnicities. The movie industry shows numerous images of a variety of races throughout its films. Hollywood movie images have the ability and the power to allow audiences to generate thoughts, views and opinions about different social, political or ideological issues based on what they see and how it is perceived.¹⁶ Hollywood movies are very popular with most nations around the world and more countries around the world turn to Hollywood blockbusters for entertainment. Hollywood is like an octopus with tentacles extending across the globe. For decades, most of its sustenance came from domestic ticket sales within the United States but in recent years, overseas markets have become increasingly important.¹⁷

The Hollywood movie industry entertains hundreds of millions of people worldwide, and it covered a wide variety of new impressions of various

¹⁵ Sial, Nauman, Yasar Arafat, and Abid Zafar. "Pakistan in the Bollywood Movies: A Discourse Analysis." *Journal of Indian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 125-136.

¹⁶ Balushi, Iqbal Abdul Qadir Al. "Critical Semiotic Order Theory: The Misconstruction of Arab and Muslim Identities and Voices in Hollywood Movies." Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona, 2014, 15.

¹⁷ Brook, Tom. "BBC: Culture." *BBC*. Retrieved July 18, 2019, from <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20130620-is-china-hollywoods-future>.

Stereotyping Of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies: An Analysis of Representation

places in the world over the past century. Hollywood motion pictures have exposed people to sights and sounds which are unique and otherwise difficult to experience. Movies have taken their audiences to both real and imaginary outer space, the depths of the earth, and to everywhere in between. Hollywood movies often produce erroneous images of the world and its inhabitants, and they are one of the most powerful teachers of the young.¹⁸ Various players and stake holders in the Hollywood movie industry and the US mass media such as script writers, editors, reporters, news anchors, producers, directors, studio owners, and few very popular actors etc. who are from the elite of the society have access to discourse and communicative events.¹⁹

After the Cold War, a divided world changed its shape into a unipolar world led by USA, the sole victor of the war. Decades long hostility between the two opposite spheres vanished, and USA claimed itself to be the only superpower. However, the fragile peace remained short lived as on September 11, 2001, twin towers of New York were targeted in a terrorist attack changing the course of history. After 9/11, Al-Qaeda, an Afghan based terrorist organization was blamed for the attacks and subsequently Afghanistan and Iraq was invaded by US led North Atlantic

¹⁸ Simon, Scott J. "Latent Image." *Latent Image*. Retrieved July 15, 2019, from http://pages.emerson.edu/organizations/fas/latent_image/issues/1996-04/arabs.htm.

¹⁹ Dijk, Teun A. van. "Power and the News Media." In *Political Communication in Action : States, Institutions, Movements, Audiences*, by David L. Paletz, 9-36. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 1996, 12.

Stereotyping Of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies: An Analysis of Representation

Treaty Organization (NATO) forces.²⁰ Those major stake holders in the Hollywood film industry got a new topic i.e. terrorism; a threat that not only changed the US attitude but also of the whole world. The perceived threat was so immense in magnitude that the whole world almost unanimously agreed with the US in the invasion of Afghanistan, less than a month after the attacks.²¹

Muslims became the prime victims for sharing faith with those involved in the 9/11 attacks. Number of movies were released to propagate and convince these wars as legal and justified. World audience was made to believe that Muslims are extremist and terrorist, and bore responsibility of the incident. Various researches carried out on movies of pre and post 9/11 portrayal of Muslims revealed that there was a huge difference between Muslims portrayal before and after the tragic incident.²² Hollywood has been the most widely seen medium of entertainment in the whole world. Its movies have global outreach and shape the views of a large public. In many cases where there is no alternative, people see others solely through the lens of Hollywood.²³ Therefore, Hollywood has a significant share in

²⁰ Morris, Daniel R. "Waging War Through Surprise and Terror." In *The Character of War in the 21st Century*, by Caroline Holmqvist-Jonsäter and Christopher Coker, 72-87. Oxon: Routledge, 2009.

²¹ Stahl, Roger. *Militainment, Inc: War, Media, and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2009, 9.

²² Vanhala, Helena. *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980-2001: An Analytical Study*. McFarland, 2014; Bayraktaroğlu, Kerem. *The Muslim World in Post- 9/11 American Cinema: A Critical Study, 2001-2011*. McFarland, 2018.

²³ Balushi, Iqbal Abdul Qadir Al. "Critical Semiotic Order Theory: The Misconstruction of Arab and Muslim Identities and Voices in Hollywood Movies." Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona, 2014, 15.

Stereotyping Of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies: An Analysis of Representation

constructing social reality. Islam, the world's second largest religion as well as Muslims with more than a billion and half in numbers, have often been a subject of 'mis-representation and ridicule' in the Hollywood. So the current study attempts to explore the representation of various segments of Muslims in Hollywood movies. The study would also try to find out the image of Islam through the portrayal of Islamic countries in the movies.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The debate about the difference between the reality and its construction in mass media is one of the core problems of communication research. Human beings live in a world filled with media generated images which used to construct meanings about social and political issues.²⁴ The lens which shows the world is not neutral, but is rather soaked with power and opinion of elites who operate it. And the special feature of this media is that the whole process looks so natural and normal that the very phenomenon of social construction remains invisible. Researchers have argued that there is a difference between presenting the facts and their representation. There is a thin boundary between reality and representation which Baudrillard believed, has vanished in the postmodernist era. He argued that the foundation and the experience of the real have disappeared. The primary effect of this disappearance is that the 'real world' has been substituted with the hyper-real representations. Baudrillard explained that

²⁴ Gamson, William A., David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1992: 373-393.

Stereotyping Of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies: An Analysis of Representation

such mediated stimulations have concealed the absence of reality from the mainstream media. He discussed that famous US cartoon destination 'Disneyland' was presented as imaginary just to make people believe that rest was the opposite.²⁵

The emphasis of the mass media is on production of images instead of producing facts or information.²⁶ The images put a better picture in the minds of the viewers but their relation with facts is untrustworthy. Images are reproductions of the facts but they have another meaning as well; a mental picture of a thing that is not present or say real. Baudrillard was of the view that the dramatic developments in the technology of reproduction have resulted in the implosion of reality and representation. Media messages are capable of acting as teachers of ideologies, beliefs and values, and provide interpretation of the world with or without the knowledge of their designers.²⁷ Researchers suggest that what media shows to the people may not be exactly in accordance with reality. What media portray, is not the actual picture; rather it is quite deviated from the reality,²⁸ and mostly only one side or just a part of truth revealed.²⁹

²⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. New York: Semiotext, 1988.

²⁶ Gamson, William A., David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1992: 373-393.

²⁷ Baudrillard, Jean. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. New York: Semiotext, 1988.

²⁸ Sanders, Meghan. "Stereotype Content and the African American Viewer: An Examination of African Americans Stereotyped Perceptions of Fictional Media Characters." *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. Chicago, 2009.

²⁹ Fine, Jack, and William Bird. *Shades of Prejudice: An Investigation into the South African Media's Coverage of Racial Violence and*

Stereotyping Of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies: An Analysis of Representation

Luhman argued that that mass media has a set of recursive programs that are not in line with the universally accepted values of truthfulness and objectivity. He added that media selects the information only if it is in line with the reflexive criteria of the said organization. Anything other than that is either played down and is distorted in a way to show an incomplete picture that does not fulfills the requirements of objectivity and press freedom.³⁰

Apart from showing only one side of the issue, there are other aspects that hinder complete flow of information. Mediated information or prejudice frequently appearing on the screens tends to give a significant bias to any given message. A slight distortion in a part of a given message is sufficient enough to get the whole, despite message gets distorted of other part of the message being clear of any prejudice and stereotyping.³¹ In simple words, the stereotypical element in any given media content is stronger than the rest of the message and tends to change its whole meaning. Allport stated regarding prejudice which results from over generalization of any group or community. He argued that this generalization is mostly due to lack of complete knowledge of the said marginalized group which is the result of lack of socialization with its members. However, others may not attribute

Xenophobia. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2006.

³⁰ Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of Mass Media*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

³¹ Roskos-Ewoldsen, David R., Beverly Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Francesca R. Dillman Carpentier. "Media Priming: A Synthesis." In *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, by Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann, 97-120. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002.

this feature to just lack of knowledge.³² Stereotypes are those generalizations that are false and misleading.³³ Stereotypes are the mental images that influence public opinion and influence people's interpretation.³⁴ They are widely accepted perception of people within a society about a group or its members.³⁵ Stereotypes are simplest and shortest way of providing information like any mental shorthand.³⁶ All these definitions infer that these generalizations significantly lead the said marginalized group or community immune to counterevidence. In the process, the stereotypes mould the general perception of the said community and render the group to false attributions parching them of both recognition and social respect. Blum argued that a certain feature (mostly negative) is attached to the said stereotyped group which consequently results in the social generalization about it.³⁷

Stereotyping has several forms. Racial and gender are the two most common used stereotypes in traditional media. Gender Stereotypes are general perceptions about traits of female and males along with their capabilities and the socially accepted requirements from either of these based primarily on gender. Things like 'it's a man's job' or 'that thing is

³² Allport, Gordon Willard. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

³³ Blum, Lawrence. "Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis." *Philosophical Papers*, 2004: 251-289.

³⁴ Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: MacMillan Co., 1922.

³⁵ Barlow, William, and Jannette Lake Dates. *Split Image: African Americans in the Mass Media*. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1990.

³⁶ Courtney, Alice E., and Thomas W. Whipple. *Sex Stereotyping in Advertising*. Toronto: Lexington Books, 1983.

³⁷ Blum, Lawrence. "Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis." *Philosophical Papers*, 2004: 251-289.

girlish' fall into such category. However, it may not be a cause of any serious concern for males, but females find themselves at the receiving end. Man is strong while the female is weak. Males are authoritative while females are submissive. Men are considered to be tough, hard, independent, unafraid, and in total control of their emotions.³⁸ These stereotypes are so common that one could find them even in fairy tales.³⁹ After gender, racial stereotyping is the most important and significant subject. Race is a classification system used to categorize humans into large and distinct populations or groups by anatomical, cultural, ethnic, genetic, geographical, historical, linguistic, religious, or social affiliation. The color of skin has got the lion's share of all the studies conducted on the issue of race. The Black people have been a subject of stereotyping for too long. They were considered as being strong, athletic as well as violent and criminals. The common perception among US public is that African Americans are more likely to be more violent and crime lovers than any white member of the US society.⁴⁰

Though it has been argued that Blacks have greater involvement in crime related activities than other community,⁴¹ it has been found that the public perception of Black criminology significantly surpasses the reality. Apart from association to violence related activities, Blacks have been

³⁸ Wood, Julia T. "Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on views of Gender." *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* (Wadsworth Publishing), 1994: 231-244.

³⁹ Basow, Susan A. *Gender: Stereotypes and Roles*. Belmont: Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1992.

⁴⁰ Welch, Kelly. "Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 2007: 276-288.

⁴¹ Tonry, Micheal. *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

considered as uncivilized and ill-mannered. Apart from Blacks, people hailing from other regions of the world like Asians, Latinos, and Europeans have some strange traits associated with them as well. For instance, Asian males are considered short structured, passive and having no characteristics of successful men while females are attributed with traits like caring, submissive and sexually exotic.⁴² Chinese and Japanese would easily be referred to as ‘The Little Asians’ while Indians would easily be classified as ‘over-achievers’ citing their high academic grades. Timberlake revealed that the ratings of the US immigrants from different regions of the world remained varying in accordance with their portrayal in media. According to a survey, the participants rated people belonging to Middle East region as negative in contrast to that of European and Asian fellows. Though the Middle Eastern immigrants (mostly Muslims) were considered financially sound by the survey respondents, they were considered to be violent in nature.⁴³

Ferguson acknowledged the presence of stereotypes, both racial and ethnic, along with gender discriminations.⁴⁴ Gorham argued that the news media is awash with the linguistic intergroup bias and the crime news

⁴² Chan, Connie S. "Asian American Women: The Psychological Responses to Sexual Exploitation and Cultural Stereotypes." *Women And Therapy*, 1988: 33-38.

⁴³ Timberlake, Jeffrey M., and Rhys H. Williams. "Stereotypes of U.S. Immigrants from Four Global Regions." *Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*. San Francisco, 2009, 44.

⁴⁴ Ferguson, Robert. *Representing Race: Ideology, Identity and the Media*. London: Arnold, 1998.

contained visible race related to stereotypes.⁴⁵ Spector extended the study of stereotyped media content to Disney Feature Films in which he found that the films portrayed a variety of races i.e. Asian, Jewish, Mexican and Africans with racial bias and humor. According to him, the cartoons create typical racist stereotypes of the period that produced them. Englishmen were shown as stuffy, black crows represented Blacks while the seductive East Indian girl in *The Jungle Book* stereotyped Asian female.⁴⁶ Basow argued that mainstream media exhibited volumes of gender discrimination. She explained that males get three times more representation than females during prime time on television.⁴⁷ The theory of Cultivation states that media has long term and strong effects on the psyche of the viewers. Media can play a major role in shaping public views on various issues.⁴⁸ Their perception of other community groups and judgments about social realities were shaped due to the type of content that they watched on media. People became more influenced by the news or entertainment content as compared with real happenings in society.⁴⁹ Media viewing has

⁴⁵ Gorham, Bradley W. "The Linguistic Intergroup Bias in Response to Crime News." *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. New York, 2005.

⁴⁶ Spector, Alan J. "Disney Does Diversity: The Social Context of Racial-Ethnic Imagery." In *Cultural Diversity and the U.S. Media*, by Yahya R. Kamalipour and Theresa Carilli, 39-49. New York: SUNY Press, 1998.

⁴⁷ Basow, Susan A. *Gender: Stereotypes and Roles*. Belmont: Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1992

⁴⁸ Harrison, Kristen. "Scope of Self: Toward a Model of Television's Effects on Self-Complexity in Adolescence." *Communication Theory*, 2006: 251-279.

⁴⁹ Covert, Juanita J., and Travis L. Dixon. "A Changing View: Representation and Effects of the Portrayal of Women of Color in

the ability to change mindsets resulting in distorted perceptions about others and reality.⁵⁰ The media also strengthens biases and stereotypes by giving a stimulus to the existing stereotypes. A simple idea could act as a catalyst that goes way forward in enhancing already existing beliefs in minds of the viewers.⁵¹

Past researchers have found a positive association between formation of prejudices and stereotypes, and the influence of traditional media.⁵² Some other researchers have also highlighted how stereotyping in the mass media has an impact on the attitudes and behaviors of the society.⁵³ Mass media can also play a significant role in shaping children's attitude towards the world around them.⁵⁴ Not only the children but even the adults find themselves inspired by how media shows the marginalized others. In a study about Latinos perception in the US, it was found that content on

Mainstream Women's Magazines." *Communication Research*, 2008: 232-256.

⁵⁰ Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, Nancy Signorielli, and James Shanahan. "Growing Up with Television: Cultivation Processes." *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 2002: 43-67.

⁵¹ Roskos-Ewoldsen, David R., Beverly Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Francesca R. Dillman Carpentier. "Media Priming: A Synthesis." In *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, by Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann, 97-120. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002.

⁵² Ferguson, Robert. *Representing Race: Ideology, Identity and the Media*. London: Arnold, 1998.

⁵³ Dixon, Travis L. "A Social Cognitive Approach to Studying Racial Stereotyping in the Mass Media." *African American Research Perspectives*, 2000: 60-68.

⁵⁴ Hobbs, Renee, Aghigh Ebrahimi, Nuala Cabral, Jiwon Yoon, and Rawia Al-Humaidan. "Combating Middle East Stereotypes through Media Literacy Education in Elementary School." *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. Singapore, 2010.

the news and the entertainment media strongly affected the non-Latinos perception about the Latinos.⁵⁵ Welsh discussed that the negative stereotypes in the US media resulted in an increased public perception that most of the Black men were involved in crime and violence related activities.⁵⁶ Religious, racial and ethnic bias, a continued feature of US population, has seen marked decline in the recent decades, but, notable exceptions still remain. A strange case has been of the Muslims, who continue to be considered as less favorable in contrast to most of the religious and ethnic minorities.⁵⁷

HOLLYWOOD, ISLAM AND MUSLIMS:

After the attacks of 9/11, mainstream US media featured in their headlines as, ‘Yes, This is About Islam’, ‘This is a Religious War’, ‘The Revolt of Islam’, ‘The Deep Intellectual Roots of Islamic Terror’, ‘Muslim Rage’, and ‘Jihad 101’.⁵⁸ Though 9/11 enhanced the process of negative stereotypes against Islam and Muslims, it was never the starting point. Even before, Muslims, Arabs and Middle Easterners have faced discrimination and hatred from the natives due to actions of the people

⁵⁵ Barreto, Matt A., Sylvia Manzano, and Gary Segura. *The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes Towards Latinos*. Seattle: National Hispanic Media Coalition, 2012.

⁵⁶ Welch, Kelly. "Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 2007: 276-288.

⁵⁷ Kalkan, Kerem Ozan, Geoffrey C. Layman, and Eric M. Uslaner. "'Bands of Others'? Attitudes toward Muslims in Contemporary American Society." *The Journal of Politics*, 2009: 847-862.

⁵⁸ Seib, Philip. "The News Media and 'the Clash of Civilizations'." In *Media and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Philip Seib, 217-34. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

who shared their faith resulting in a disturbing situation for them.⁵⁹ Ahmad stated that the media was and is responsible for shaping the public opinion against the Islam and Muslims after the incident of 9/11. Ahmad also argued that media discourses have impinged upon their lives, fueling hostility and hatred from non-Muslims, and feelings of resentment, marginalization and apathy amongst themselves.⁶⁰ Jack Shaheen explained how the US film industry has over the decades, vilified and presented Muslims especially Arabs in a negative way. In the analysis of over 900 Hollywood films, Shaheen laid the historical foundation for examining how the Hollywood film genre has represented and stereotyped the Arab community in U.S. popular culture. He explains how the world's leading film industry relies on stereotypical images of Muslims, ranging from uneducated bedouins and bandits to oil rich and lavish spending sheikhs, and from harem sitting girls to submissive but sensual females. He highlighted that the repeated use of such mediated images has neutralized the biased attitudes towards Muslims and Arabs, and justified the US behaviour towards them domestically and at the international level. He stated, "when it comes to Arab character in movies, Hollywood has only one kind: Bad Arabs".⁶¹

⁵⁹ Brinson, Mary. "Muslims in the Media: The Impact of Varying Media Portrayals on Intergroup Relations and Boundary Permeability Between Muslims and Non-Muslims in America." *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. Boston, 2011.

⁶⁰ Ahmad, Fauzia. "British Muslim Perceptions and Opinions on News Coverage of September 11." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2006: 961-982.

⁶¹ Shaheen, Jack G. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2001; Shehadeh, Michel. "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People (Jack Shaheen)."

Oumlil argued on the Hollywood movie *The Siege* (1998) that the film maker has gone miles ahead in contrary to what could have been termed as justice in movie. The film revolves around Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and army operation in a Muslim dominated community of New York, which depicts as harbouring terrorists. The establishment violent was justified while the residents i.e. Muslims were shown as terrorists. The film utilizes the Orientalist discourse which clearly relies on positional superiority of the West over the Orient. Oumlil also discussed that the representation of Arabs and Muslims in the Hollywood was negative and limited, and that the Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiments in film industry dated back even before the tragic incident of 9/11.⁶² Aguayo analysed the various scenes of Hollywood movie *The Kingdom* (2007) that depicted the Muslim men as lecherous, pre-modern and uncivilized, adding that those who were shown to be otherwise in constant conflict with themselves. On the other hand, the Muslim females were scripted as being imperilled, uneducated and oppressed specie that was used by the powerful males of the family to satisfy their biological and sexual needs. He also argued that there is a dire need to critically analyse the different complex ways through which Hollywood cinema is depicting Muslims especially Arabs as dangerous and uncivilized.⁶³

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 19, no. 4 (2002): 139-41.

⁶² Oumlil, Kenza. "Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood: Breaking Down the Siege." *Understanding Violence*, August 2012: 15-23.

⁶³ Aguayo, Michelle. "Representations of Muslim Bodies in The Kingdom: Deconstructing Discourses in Hollywood." *Global Media Journal*, 2009: 41-56.

RQ-1: How Hollywood represents various Muslim segments?

RQ-2: How Hollywood represents the image of Islam by portraying Islamic countries?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Berger and Luckmann in 1966 presented the theory of social construction of reality. The theory states that the reality is not a fixed or objective term. Rather, it's a subjective phenomenon which requires our interpretation to form a shape. Theorists argue that reality is different for everyone. The central concept of the social construction of reality states that reality is subjective and is constructed socially. The term refers to the theory that our interaction with others shape the way we present ourselves to them. Similarly, our life experiences have an impact on how we perceive others to be. Moreover, how we were raised and what we were taught to believe also affect how we present ourselves, how we perceive others, and how others perceive us. In short, our perceptions of reality are shaped by our beliefs and backgrounds. Berger and Luckmann argued that persons and the groups which are interacting in a social system create concepts and mental images of actions of each other, and that these images eventually become fixated into in the minds of the actors. They stated that when these roles make available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the mental images or concepts said to be institutionalized. As a result of this institutionalization, the meaning is embedded in the society. The knowledge and people's belief of reality enters the institutional fabric of

the society. Hence, reality is said to be socially constructed.⁶⁴ Luhmann focuses on the working dynamics of mass media. He clearly stated that every broadcast includes selection and presentation of facts. These selected facts used to create a specific image. The repetition and narrow focus of media generates a subjective reality at the cost of objective presentation of facts. Luhmann affirmed that people use mass media to construct their own reality which is then used as a reference for the future interactions. He criticises the fact that mass media is considered just a tool of processing information rather than an act of consciousness.⁶⁵

METHODOLOGY:

The qualitative content analysis has been used as a research design for this study. Content analysis is defined as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description on the manifest content of communications.⁶⁶ Content analysis is a research method based on measuring the amount of something such as violence, negative portrayal of women, or whatever that could be found in a representative sample of a mass-mediated popular art form.⁶⁷ Content analysis is one of the major methods of research in social sciences. It provides a basic framework for

⁶⁴ Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Penguin Books, 1966.

⁶⁵ Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of Mass Media*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

⁶⁶ Berelson, Bernard. *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Free Press, 1952, P:18

⁶⁷ Berger, Arthur Asa. *Media Research Techniques*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1998, P:23

evaluation of frames, words, sentences and many other things in media-related researches.⁶⁸

POPULATION AND SELECTION OF SAMPLE FILMS:

The population for this study is the Hollywood movies that have been released in the cinema halls of United States of America regarding Islam and Muslims. The top hundred grossing Hollywood films that were released during the year 2012 were selected from the movie website i.e. Internet Movie Database (IMDb). In various movies, there was very low depiction of Islam or many tiny Muslims characters which had nothing to do with Islam or Muslims representation. So four Hollywood movies were selected through purposive sampling which had a predominantly Muslims characters or were completely filmed in an Islamic country. The movies i.e. *The Dictator*, *Argo*, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Taken 2* were selected for this purpose. A single scene of each movie has been taken as a unit of analysis.

SYNOPSIS OF MOVIES

i. The Dictator

Starred by Sacha Baron Cohen, *The Dictator* is the story of the tyrant ruler of a North African country named Wadiya bordering Sudan (clearly a mocking representation of Libya). The story revolves around the US trip of the ruler where he intends to teach the West a lesson for pushing him to introduce democracy in his country and giving up nuclear arms. During his

⁶⁸ Kerlinger, Fred N. *Behaviorial Research: A Conceptual Approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.

visit, he finds himself betrayed by his step brother, also his closest aide, and finds that all of his people had conspired to get rid of him. With the help of his ex-chief nuclear scientist, he tries to foil all attempts of the West and his traitor fellows to give his country a new constitution. However, after falling in love with a female rights activist in US, he ends up himself introducing democracy in his country and framing a new constitution.⁶⁹

ii. Argo

Ben Affleck starrer, *Argo* is based on the story of a rescue operation of six American embassy officials trapped during the infamous Iran hostage crisis of 1979 in Iranian capital Tehran. Acting as a cover of a Hollywood film producer, Tony Mendez (played by Ben) moves to Iran where six of his countrymen, who escaped from the embassy moments before the takeover, used to hide in the residence of the Canadian ambassador to Iran. With the help of a fake film company in Los Angeles made in the name of a fake film, Tony successfully manages to take out his countrymen by presenting them as the members of his film crew, despite a manhunt of any foreigner by the Iranian Revolutionary security apparatus. During the process, Tony faces a stern risk of losing his life and also manages to

⁶⁹ Cohen, Sacha Baron, Alec Berg, David Mandel, and Jeff Schaffer. *The Dictator*. Directed by Larry Charles. Produced by Sacha Baron Cohen, et al. Performed by Sacha Baron Cohen, Anna Faris and Ben Kingsley. 2012.

befool a revolutionary guard who hell bent on finding a way to stop the crew at the airport.⁷⁰

iii. Zero Dark Thirty

Based on the US hunt for Osama bin Laden, the film is the story of an ultra-smart female CIA agent who single handedly conjures up the locating and hunting down of world's most wanted terrorist. The movie starts with the recorded messages of the individuals trapped in the twin towers on the tragic day of 9/11. After that, the CIA agent lands in Pakistan to start her hunt. During the decade long search, the agent keeps on focusing on a single lead which she believes to be the courier of bin Laden, despite of unsupportive behavior by the high ups. However, after losing her best friend in a suicide attack in Afghanistan, the agent gets a positive response on her lead, which later became the foundation of hunting down the Al-Qaeda chief in the May 2011 operation by the US Navy SEALs.⁷¹

iv. Taken 2

Taken 2 is the sequel of a 2008 film Taken. Starring by Liam Neeson, who played the part of a retired CIA operative named Bryan Mills. The story of the movie revolves around the kidnap and escape of the Bryan in Turkey by a group of Albanian persons (shown as Muslims) who were the relatives of the members of a gang destroyed by Bryan in the first movie.

⁷⁰ *Argo*. Directed by Ben Affleck. Produced by Ben Affleck, George Clooney and Grant Heslov. Performed by Ben Affleck, Bryan Cranston, Alan Arkin and John Goodman. 2012.

⁷¹ Boal, Mark. *Zero Dark Thirty*. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. Produced by Kathryn Bigelow, Mark Boal and Megan Ellison. Performed by Jason Clarke, Jessica Chastain and Joel Edgerton. 2012.

The revengeful Albanians manage to take Bryan and his wife as hostages from a bazaar in Istanbul, Turkey. But with the help of his daughter, Bryan manages to survive the ordeal and manages to kill the Albanians in the end. The movie was mostly filmed in Turkey and USA, and also shows some images of Albania.⁷²

CATEGORIES

This study is not meant to analyze single character, rather it categorize various segments of Muslim population and Islamic countries. These categories are on the basis of:

1. Muslim Population

- i. Rulers
- ii. Officials
- iii. Public
- iv. Law Enforcement Agencies

2. Islamic Countries

- i. Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- ii. Islamic Republic of Iran
- iii. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- iv. Republic of Turkey
- v. State of Libya

⁷² Besson, Luc, and Robert Mark Kamen. *Taken 2*. Directed by Olivier Megaton. Produced by Luc Besson. Performed by Liam Neeson, Maggie Grace and Famke Janssen. 2012.

Operationalization of Key Variables

Variable	Category	Sub Category	Indicators
Representation	1. Slant	Pro-Western	The one who likes West
		Undetermined	The one which couldn't be determined
		Anti-Western	The one which dislikes West
		Not Applied	When character from other than Muslims show
	2. Life	Troubled	Filled with problems, fear and difficulties
		Peaceful	Free from any disturbance
		Undetermined	The one which couldn't be determined.
		Not Applied	When country from other than Muslim country show
	3. People	Civilized	Polite and good mannered
		Uncivilized	Impolite, bad mannered
		Undetermined	The one which couldn't be determined.
		Not Applied	When people from other than Muslims show
	4. Infrastructure	Developed	Economically and socially advanced
		Under-	Economically and

	Developed	socially backward
	Undetermined	The one which couldn't be determined
	Not Applied	When country from other than Muslim country show

Analysis

A total of 287 movie scenes were collected during the study and the data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). As per the analysis, the movie *Argo* had most scenes i.e. 91 followed by *Zero Dark Thirty* which had 76 of them. *The Dictator* remained third with 62 while *Taken 2* had 58 scenes relevant to the study.

Movie	Frequency	Percentage
The Dictator	62	21.6
Argo	91	31.7
Zero Dark Thirty	76	26.5
Taken 2	58	20.2
Total	287	100.0

Table 1: Percentage of Relevant Scenes

The results in table 1 show that the *Argo* provided the most data for analysis with a 31.7 percentage share followed by *Zero Dark Thirty* with 26.5 percent share.

RQ-1: How Hollywood represents various Muslim segments?

1. Slant

Category	Slant				Total
	Pro West	Undetermined	Anti-West	N/A	
Rulers	4 (7%)	32 (57%)	20 (35%)	0	56
Public	3 (7%)	21 (50%)	18 (43%)	6	48
Officials	5 (20%)	10 (40%)	10 (40%)	2	27
Law Enforcement Agencies	5 (13%)	8 (21%)	24 (65%)	0	37
N/A	2 (1%)	7 (5%)	1 (0.8%)	109	119
Total	19 (11%)	81 (47%)	70 (41%)	117	287

Table 2: Segments

The results indicated (as shown in Table 2) that 35% scenes of rulers were shown as anti-West and the public slant was also 43% anti-West. Also, 40% of the officials of the Muslim countries were shown as bearing anti-West slant while only 20% officials were with a pro-West slant. The law enforcement agencies of the Muslim countries were having the most anti-West slant which was 65% as compared to pro-West which was only 13%.

RQ-2: How Hollywood represents the image of Islam by portraying Islamic countries?

The representation of the countries was evaluated by finding out three main categories i.e. life, the infrastructure and the people of the respective country. A total of five Islamic countries were shown in the selected movies.

Name of Country	Frequency	Percent
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Pakistan	53	18.5
Iran	86	30.0
Afghanistan	17	5.9
Turkey	52	18.1
Libya (Wadiya)	19	6.6
Others	14	4.9
N/A	46	16.0
Total	287	100.0

Table 3: Representation of Islamic Countries

The results from the Table 3 revealed that Iran was the country with most number of scenes i.e. 86, followed by Pakistan with 53 scenes. Turkey was third in the list with 52 while Libya that was dubbed in the movie as Wadiya had 19 scenes. Afghanistan was the last country with significant number of 17 scenes.

2. Life:

Life in Islamic Countries (in Percentage)					
Country	Peaceful	Undetermined	Troubled	N/A	Total
Pakistan	15.1	30.2	54.7	0.0	100.0
Iran	7.0	29.1	60.5	3.4	100.0
Afghanistan	11.8	29.4	52.9	5.9	100.0
Turkey	26.9	61.5	11.5	0.1	100.0
Libya (Wadiya)	10.5	26.3	63.2	0.0	100.0
Others	14.3	0.0	71.4	14.3	100.0
N/A	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
Total	11.8	28.9	41.1	18.2	100.0

Table 4

The results showed (as in Table 4) that the life in Iran was portrayed as troubled in 60.5% of scenes while only 7% scenes were shown as peaceful. The life in Pakistan was also shown as troubled in 54.7% scenes whereas only 15.1% scenes were portrayed as peaceful. The life in Turkey was shown as peaceful in 26.9% movie scenes while 11.5% scenes were depicted as troubled. Also, the life in Libya (Wadiya) was shown as troubled in 63.2% scenes while only 10.5% scenes were portrayed as

peaceful. The life in Afghanistan was also shown as troubled in 52.9% scenes against 11.8% where it was shown as peaceful.

3. People

People of Islamic Countries (in Percentage)					
Country	Civilized	Undetermined	Uncivilized	N/A	Total
Pakistan	9.4	62.3	7.5	20.8	100.0
Iran	22.1	24.4	22.1	31.4	100.0
Afghanistan	0.0	76.5	11.8	11.7	100.0
Turkey	12.0	26.0	2.0	60.0	100.0
Libya (Wadiya)	0.0	10.5	89.5	0.0	100.0
Others	21.4	50.0	14.3	14.3	100.0
N/A	0.0	0.0	10.9	89.1	100.0
Total	11.5	33.1	26.5	28.9	100.0

Table 5

The results indicated (as in Table 5) that the Iranian people were shown evenly with both civilized and uncivilized indicators at an equal level of 22.1%. However, the people of Pakistan were shown as mostly civilized in 9.4% scenes as compared to uncivilized in 7.5%. The Turkish people were shown as being civilized in 12% of scenes while only 2% scenes were depicted as uncivilized. The people of Libya (Wadiya) were shown as being uncivilized in 89.5% scenes with no depiction of being civilized. Also, the Afghani people were shown as uncivilized in 11.8% scenes with no representation as being civilized.

4. Infrastructure

Infrastructure of Islamic Countries (in Percentage)					
Country	Developed	Undetermined	Underdeveloped	N/A	Total
Pakistan	13.2	49.1	37.7	0.0	100.0
Iran	19.8	59.3	18.6	2.3	100.0
Afghanistan	17.6	58.9	17.6	5.9	100.0
Turkey	26.9	55.8	17.3	0.0	100.0
Libya (Wadiya)	47.4	31.5	21.1	0.0	100.0
Others	21.4	28.6	35.7	14.3	100.0
N/A	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
Total	18.5	43.9	19.9	17.7	100.0

Table 6

The results revealed (as in Table 6) that the infrastructure of Iran was represented as developed in 19.8% scenes in contrast to underdeveloped which was 18.6%. The infrastructure of Pakistan was portrayed as underdeveloped in 37.7% scenes while only 13.2% scenes were depicted as developed one. However, the infrastructure of Turkey was depicted as developed in 26.9% of scenes while 17.3% was shown as underdeveloped. The infrastructure of Libya (Wadiya) was shown as underdeveloped in 21.1% scenes whereas the infrastructure of Afghanistan was shown evenly with 17.6% representation in both developed and underdeveloped scenes.

CONCLUSION:

From the analysis, it has been concluded that Hollywood keeps on following its trend of negative representation of Islam and Muslims in most of its films. In the selected movies, it was visible that for Hollywood,

Muslims are all the same without any distinguishing of good or evil. All the segments of Muslims were depicted in a negative way. Rulers, public, government officials and law enforcement agencies were all have the negative representation in the movies of the year 2012. Apart from the segments, when it came to representation of Islamic countries in the Hollywood films, it was found that the trend was not much different. Almost all the Islamic countries that ranged from a South Asian Pakistan to an African state of Libya, were having an almost identical representation, while Turkey being the only country with a positive representation. There was some positive development as far as the infrastructure of the Islamic countries was concerned, but no other change was observed in depiction of people of the Islamic countries. Similarly, life in Islamic countries was also shown as clearly troubled. The messages emanating from Hollywood are strong and global; hence they need to be reviewed and must be made to be more based on reality.

The reliance of stereotyping regarding Islam and Muslims has always been an old practice of Hollywood, dating back to start of feature films. But the researchers have observed that it continues even today. The West usually uses these special tactics to promote the notion of clash of civilizations.⁷³ Through the negative and stereotyped portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the movies, the worldwide viewers of Hollywood films can perceive fear

⁷³ Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49.

and threat in their minds regarding Islam and Muslims. The viewers might also start disliking the religion of Islam and its followers. This could be the reason that Islamophobic and anti-Muslim incidents including the burning of mosques and attacks on worshippers have surged in most parts of the world such as in US,⁷⁴ Canada,⁷⁵ Europe⁷⁶ as well as in New Zealand.⁷⁷ Moreover, the rise of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim movement in Germany i.e. Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) is

⁷⁴ Weill, Kelly. "More Than 500 Attacks on Muslims in America This Year." The Daily Beast Company, Retrieved January 15, 2020, from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/were-living-through-a-historic-surge-of-freedom-and-trump-and-his-gop-hate-it?ref=scroll>.

⁷⁵ Kassam, Ashifa, and Jamiles Lartey. "Québec City Mosque Shooting: Six Dead as Trudeau Condemns 'Terrorist Attack'." Guardian News & Media, Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/30/quebec-mosque-shooting-canada-deaths>.

⁷⁶ Batchelor, Tom. "Sweden's Largest Shia Mosque Burned Down in Suspected Arson Attack." The Independent, Retrieved January 18, 2020, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sweden-mosque-fire-arson-stockholm-police-jakobsberg-imam-ali-islamic-centre-a7711431.html>; Dodd, Vikram, and Matthew Taylor. "London Attack: 'Aggressive' and 'Strange' Suspect Vowed to 'Do Some Damage'." Guardian News & Media, Retrieved January 18, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/19/several-casualties-reported-after-van-hits-pedestrians-in-north-london>.

⁷⁷ Roy', Eleanor Ainge, and Lisa Martin. "49 Shot Dead in Attack on Two Christchurch Mosques." Guardian News & Media, Retrieved January 19, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/15/multiple-fatalities-gunman-christchurch-mosque-shooting>.

a clear example of absolute hatred against Islam and its followers.⁷⁸ The Hollywood movies of 2012 have also a clear manifestation of stereotypical trend which needs to be reviewed as it could have more severe consequences for the religion of Islam and its believers.



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⁷⁸ Sial, Nauman, Abid Zafar, and Yasar Arafat. "Islamophobia in Germany: A Case Study of PEGIDA." *The Scholar-Islamic Academic Research Journal* 5, no. 2 (2019): 160-180.