



Working under the shadow of Taboo & Blasphemy: Coverage of Minorities in Pakistani Press under the Blasphemy Law

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Abstract

The controversial murder of Governor Punjab Salman Taseer lead to many questions on the role and responsibilities of Private media with reference to the blasphemy issues in Pakistan. The basic objective of the paper was to investigate the coverage given to issues of minorities, to highlight the sensitivity of blasphemy issue and to examine the media role in this contest. Total 67 new stories from 2 leading English and 2 leading Urdu news papers were taken over a period of 1 year , of which total 18 stories out of 67 were found anti- minorities , whereas a number of 35 stories showed a positive bend and 14 news stories were found being neutral. In general this research found that very less coverage was given to minorities in the year. However, the results suggest that all the news paper gave positive coverage to the minority groups.

Introduction

Since 1986 to 2010, an estimated 1274 individuals were charged under the Blasphemy law of Islamic State of Pakistan and over 51 of them were murdered despite their trials weren't completed. On March 21st, 2016, a 50-year old mentally challenged man from Charsadda district in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa was shot to death outside his shop for allegedly committing blasphemy (Express Tribune). In an even worse incident, a policeman shot two blasphemy-accused prisoners in Adiala Jail in September 2014, killing one and wounding the other. Two months later another policeman in Gujrat axed a man in custody to death for his alleged blasphemy (Hassan). In another spillover case of Pakistan's ongoing and vicious blasphemy inquisition being waged by the country's increasingly belligerent mullah mafia, a Pakistani-born Ahmadi man, Asad Shah, was stabbed to death in Scotland. Such issues related to Blasphemy Law of Pakistan and its consequences have been lime lighted by media all over the world many times, especially, when some new Blasphemy Law related cases come forth. Although, minorities have been major victims of the law but many Muslims have suffered the consequences for voicing their views about the law as well. In January 2011, his bodyguard, for supporting a non-Muslim and commenting over the blasphemy law, murdered Governor Punjab, Salman Taseer. After the incident, the issue became so sensitive that even Pakistani media doesn't discuss it openly.

With low literacy level, increasing media outlets and technological advancement, it's not too difficult for Pakistani media to influence public and play a vital role in shaping opinions. The understanding, its use and the application of blasphemy law have had the potential of creating division and clash in Pakistani society.

In developing countries, privately owned media usually face situation where the capital motive come into direct clash with their information diffusion role in society. The focus of this research is to see the nature and extent of information dissemination function of leading newspapers where the prime motive of the privately owned media is capital.

Coverage of four leading newspapers, two English and two Urdu have been observed for one year, January 2014 to December 2014. The research focuses on the role of these four newspapers regarding coverage of news and views on blasphemy related cases and issues.

The newspapers whose content has been chosen are two English dailies and two Urdu dailies. English papers include Dawn and Express Tribune whereas the Urdu ones are Jang



and Nawa-e-Waqt.

The decision to choose four national dailies was made after judging the popularity and circulation of each newspaper. Daily Dawn is listed among the eldest newspaper of Pakistan and has a large population of readers across the country with daily circulation of over 109,000 recorded in 2010. It is owned by Dawn group of Newspapers and printed by Pakistan Herald Publications. In order to circulate in larger audience and to cope up with modern technology, Dawn also started its daily E-edition on internet. Its competitor, The Express Tribune has a distinction of being the country's only internationally affiliated newspaper; the International New York Times. By 2012, Express Tribune was in the list of largest online readership in the country.

The Urdu language dailies that were chosen had much higher circulation than the English language ones. Daily Jang has its readership spread across the Pakistan with the daily circulation of over 800,000 copies. While no circulation figures for Nawa-i-Waqt were available, it is generally perceived as a highly credible newspaper by the Pakistani masses.

1.6 An Overview of the Blasphemy Law of Pakistan

In order to comprehend the gravity of the situation, it is vital to know the dynamics behind the blasphemy law – its roots, consequences and the many controversies surrounding it. In this regard, the following lines entail the basics of the law along with the statistics of victims who have been oppressed due to the misuse of said law.

The Indian Penal Code of 1860 set the foundations of the present-day blasphemy laws included in the Pakistani constitution. While 295-A introduced by the British witnessed only 7 cases of blasphemy from 1927 to 1986, the number of reported cases surged 1986 onwards (over 600 in number).

The Hudood Ordinances enacted in 1979 also saw the addition of a number of sections in the Pakistan Penal Code's chapter XV. These laws were enforced in the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq and consisted of section 298-A (offensive comments on holy personalities, 295-B (disgracing Holy Quran) and 298-B (misuse of titles and descriptions specific to holy figures and places). The biggest drawback of these sections was that they dealt only with the state religion – Islam. Mansoor, R. (2010)

In 1986, section 295-C (derogatory remarks regarding Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also added through a parliamentary act thereby making it a criminal offence punishable with life imprisonment or death.

The Census of 1998 showed that population of minorities in the country was an estimated six million, making up 3.7 percent of the entire citizenry. Hindus marginally outnumber Christians, with a total population of 83 percent amongst the minorities. The majority of these Hindus (up to 93 percent) reside in Sindh.

According to an analysis of 361 cases between 1986 and 2007, 49 percent of the accusations and charges of blasphemy were against non-Muslims. 26 percent cases were against Ahmadis and 21 percent against Christians – this is especially alarming when considered that minorities do not compose more than 4 percent of the country's population.

Of the provinces, Punjab has the highest incidence of blasphemy accusations (69 percent) while Sindh follows with 15 percent cases and NWFP with 4 percent. The regions that have constituted the highest number of blasphemy cases include Faisalabad, Lahore, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Kasur and Toba Tek Singh. Christians comprise of 5 percent of the entire population in these areas while composing 50 percent of the total



Christian population of Pakistan. In Punjab, while Muslims had 43 percent cases registered against them, almost 65 percent cases were against Christians.

From 1960 to 2007, the higher courts received a total of 104 blasphemy cases. Section 295-C was invoked in 41 of these cases while 11 of 12 cases saw the acquittal of the accused due to shortcomings in the prosecution's proceedings.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have remained at the center of fierce debate for years, especially after the murder of Salman Taseer in 2011. The issue has made headlines in the media for years now and has led to questionable restrictions on freedom of expression. For instance, in May of 2010 a short-lived ban was imposed on Facebook whereas YouTube remains shut on similar grounds of blasphemous content (Walsh, 2010). Leaders of minority groups and human rights activists have criticized the country's blasphemy law for long, claiming them to be disproportionately harsh. They continue to argue that the laws are exploited by extremists to target minority groups and for exacting personal revenge (Freedom House, n.d.).

The blasphemy clause of Section 295-C was induced in Pakistan Penal Code in 1986. A number of clauses were added to this law in the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq. There are many opinions against the law that Many believe that the law is ambiguous that it does not define 'defiling' (The Persecution of Ahmadis, 2012).

In 1991, under the suggestion of Federal Shariat Court, alternative of life imprisonment was removed. The only applicable penalty is Death. The case of Governor Taseer Murdered by his own guard attracted international attention towards Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Local anchors and TV personalities did extensive debates on the story. The point of view of the governor's assassinator was given equal coverage. Media remained at the forefront to highlight the various angles of the issue and it did play a key role in informing the audience. However, the constant dread of backlash from extremist elements from the society and the sensitivity surrounding the topic kept many from discussing the blasphemy law itself. Most media personnel chose to remain quiet and despite the high-profile murder, the story was not as thoroughly debated as that of other high-profile assassinated Pakistani leaders; Benazir Bhutto for instance.

For this matter, thorough review was carried out of various literatures available on the topic. Different research papers and journals were thoroughly studied to explore whether other researchers also felt that Pakistani media remained mute over the issue of blasphemy, among other topics. We also aimed to unearth the amount of coverage given to blasphemy-related news items, and the way those items were framed and portrayed.

The table comprising the Blasphemy law and penalties is given below.

PPC	DESCRIPTION	PENALTY
298	Uttering of any word or making any sound or making any gesture or placing of any object in the sight with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person.	1 years imprisonment, or fine, or both
298-A	Use of derogatory remarks etc., in respect of holy personages. 1980	3 years imprisonment, or fine, or both
298-B	(Ahmadi blasphemy law) Misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles etc., reserved for certain holy personages or places, by Ahmadis. 26 April 1984	3 years imprisonment and fine



298-C	(Ahmadi blasphemy law) Aka Ordinance XX: An Ahmadi, calling himself a Muslim, or preaching or propagating his faith, or "in any manner whatsoever" outraging the religious feelings of Muslims, or posing himself as a Muslim. 26 April 1984	3 years imprisonment and fine
295	Injuring or defiling places of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class	Up to 2 years imprisonment or fine, or both
295-A	Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs. 1927	Up to 10 years imprisonment, or fine, or both
295-B	Defiling, etc., of Quran. 1982	Imprisonment for life
295-C	Use of derogatory remarks, spoken, written, directly or indirectly, etc. defiles the name of Muhammad. 1986	Mandatory Death and fine (Feb. 1990) Trial must take place in a Court of Session with a Muslim judge presiding.

In the recent times of modern technology, media is the most influential tool to draw the attention of people towards any issue. Several communication theories have been proposed in order to explain the complexity and diversity of media.

Framing refers to the idea of focusing on particular aspects of an issue in order to resist or limit the audience on the issue. Whereas, Social Responsibility theory helps media adopt the professionalism and its core duty to not just do the objective reporting rather investigative role for the understanding the gravity of issues that have direct impact on society as important as the topic under discussion. By considering media's working is this context, media can play a positive role if it serves the purpose of resolving the conflict.

So this can be claimed that media could have a significant impact on society. It is also observed that media helped people to shape a particular view on the major problems of society.

Research has used assumption that Pakistani print media is only reporting the minority issues and not addressing the core issue, that is, resolving the blasphemy law controversy in the country. According to social responsibility and framing media always highlight minority issues according to their own interest and media always frame a particular issue according to their interest. In this research "Coverage of Minority Issues in Leading English and Urdu Newspapers, in Perspective of Blasphemy Law" researcher has used three theories, which helped to analyze the content for this research.

The current research tested the validity of two theories. In order to see how they are applicable and related to the current study and what is the commonality between these and the current work given below is the detail of the theories.

Research Questions

1. How much coverage is given to minority related issues?
2. What is the nature of coverage given to minority related issues?
3. Do leading Pakistani Urdu and English newspapers portray the issue of blasphemy in a socially responsible way?



2.1 General Zia's Policies

One of the first literatures studied in this regard is titled "Unholy Speech and Holy Laws: Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan—Controversial Origins, Design Defects, and Free Speech Implications". The detailed paper is divided into several sections, most of what is focused on General Zia-ul-Haq's policies and constitutional amendments that shape the blasphemy law of Pakistan today. The writers shine a light on the loopholes that exist in the blasphemy law and provide several examples to prove their point.

The research paper is informational rather than critical. It provides general, but extremely valuable, information to help the reader better understand the blasphemy law from various angles. The authors dissect the problem to its core and lay out clear explanations carefully divided into different sections. Ranging from Zia's Islamization to and the implication of blasphemy law on free speech, the authors give detailed analysis of the topic. The understanding gained from that reading reflected in my own research.

2.2 Diversity of Culture, Ethnicity and Religion in Pakistan

Jawad Syed in his research paper titled "Representation of cultural diversity in Urdu newspapers in Pakistan" has set out to explore how diverse is the representation of ethnicity and religion in the print media of Pakistan. For this matter, he studies two leading Urdu newspapers between February and July 2006 and examines the text to see the variety of ideologies contained therein.

Syed begins by outlining the diversity of culture, ethnicity and religion within Pakistan. He highlights all the basic ethnic and religious statistics that make up the country's population and offers a bit of history. Syed cleverly links these statistics to major events in the history of Pakistan. For instance, he offers that the breakup of East and West Pakistan into Bangladesh and just Pakistan was rooted in ethnic identity. The Bengalis were given little representation in the government while the media also chose to ignore them. As a result, protests broke out that lead to a full-fledge war and Bengalis formed their own nation. (Hussain, 2010).

Last 2 sections of Syed's research concentrate only on media's role in creating 'mainstream' and 'other' identities among society. The ensuing discussion and conclusion are logically constructed and are certainly enlightening.

The analysis highlights different aspects of ethnicity, religion and the media with data revealing a consistent ignorance of subcultures in Pakistan. The media portraying Islamic culture in such a way that it overlooks or makes the minority cultures almost invisible further manipulates this. Syed's critical analysis thoroughly examines how media culture articulates the dominant values and socio-political ideologies in a society and marginalizes the minority viewpoints.

The author of the research paper chose the Daily Jang and Nawaiwaqt newspapers. Both of these newspapers are mainstream and are more widely read than other papers. This careful choice of newspapers reflects a lot about the author's research. Since the two newspapers are one of the most read papers in the country, it is expected that they are the trendsetters. They are likely to cover news in the most professional way and are expected to cover news from all sections of the society. Had the author chosen papers with little readership, the outcomes of the research may not have been that solid.

Despite the careful choice of papers, the outcome of the research was dismal. The author was able to conclude that the representation of minority groups and cultures in the media was close to non-existent. Be it ethnicity or religion, the media tends to focus on dominant beliefs. Anything reported other than that is considered 'against the norm'.



Syed highlights few critical points from his research. He observes an irresistible prominence of Pakistan's Islamic identity that act as an melting pot in which other type of identities are either dissolved or kept invisible. Secondly, he also found testimonies of usually negative and passive connotations about religious sub-identities. Other identities except Pakistan's national identity is considered as hazardous to country. Few groups of other identities remain subject to hatred and rejection by mainstream community. Media doesn't highlight the issues and problems faced by the religious minorities.

Thirdly, Syed notes that there is a frequent focus on the necessity of free and fair institutions. There is an evident anger against the lack of proper representation of minorities in government, unrestricted police authority, lack of social accountability and ineffectual judiciary. Fourthly, Syed found out that even power gaps and class differences were highlighted by media but it failed to address the inter-sectionality of different forms of identity.

Fifthly, Syed noticed that a number of domestic clashes were the reason of inter-group disputes and tensions. The issues of preservation of one's identity, sharing of productive resources and lack of provincial autonomy few to be named. Sixthly, Pakistan's geo strategic location and International political circumstances are having a deep impact on Pakistan's Islamic identity. Country's eldest dispute of Kashmir with India further enforced this concern. And finally, Syed suggests that a pragmatic resolution for such multicultural problems of Pakistan is through negotiations and dialogue

All of these points have been very carefully drawn from the research and reflects the author's in-depth knowledge into the issue. One shortcoming of the research, however, is the lack of diversity in the selection of media text by the author. Choosing two reliable newspapers may be a good step in the right direction to understand the role of media in educating the public but it doesn't fully highlights the extent of coverage given to minority groups. With 24-hour news channels, the amount of coverage to marginalized groups of the society has significantly increased. Had the author included some additional media texts in his research, the results of the study could have been safely generalized.

2.3 RimshahMasih Case

"Modern Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan and the RimshaMasih Case: What Effect—if any—the Case Will Have on Their Future Reform" is a comprehensive analysis of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan that uses the case of RimshaMasih—a 14-year old accused of blasphemy in 2012—to provide valuable insight into the complexity surrounding the issue of blasphemy in the country.

Adopted from the Washington University Global Studies Law Review, the 23-page research article is carefully divided into seven sections with each segment looking at the issue of blasphemy from a different angle. This methodological approach breaks down the complex issue of blasphemy into simpler, easy-to-digest slices that helps the reader form a clearer understanding of the topic; such as on the constitutional developments concerning blasphemy laws in Pakistan; the state of blasphemy laws around the world; vigilantism by Pakistani citizens in response to allegations of blasphemy; and their impact on laws and political reforms.

Matt Hoffman begins his research paper by laying out the details of the case of RimshaMasih, a fourteen year-old Christian Pakistani girl with learning disabilities who was arrested and jailed on August 16, 2012 after she was accused of tearing and burning the pages of Holy Quran. The accusation led to widespread protests by angry Pakistani Muslims.



Masih's parents were forced into hiding while the remaining Christian community in Masih's neighborhood had to flee for their lives.

What ensued was a series of unusual events. Masih's accuser, a cleric of a nearby mosque named Hafiz Mohammed Khalid Chishti, was also charged with blasphemy after it was alleged that he had deliberately planted the incriminating evidence. Witnesses claimed that they had seen Chishti putting the burnt pages of Quran into Masih's bag of ashes so as to get rid of the Christians living in his neighborhood (BBC News, 2012). As a result the Islamabad High Court acquitted Rimsha of all charges in November of the same year. The Supreme Court of Pakistan subsequently confirmed this ruling.

The unusualness of the case is based on the fact that it was the first time in the history of Pakistan that someone was arrested in a blasphemy case for fabricating the evidence. This time around religious leaders and political figures came out and openly spoke in defense of Rimsha Masih. The then-President of the country ordered a full investigation of the case and many conservative Muslim clerics spoke out in support of Masih, dubbing her the 'daughter of the nation' (Boone, 2012).

Hoffman believes that the Rimsha Masih case may as well be a sign of progress as far as the blasphemy laws of the country are concerned. It is extremely rare for a blasphemy accused to set free by the courts, whereas Masih was cleared of all charges within three months. The accountability of the accuser in the case was also a positive sign that led many to believe that the blasphemy law of the country may not be that substandard.

However, these developments may have occurred due to the unique circumstances of the case and not due to any larger movement toward reforms. Masih, being a juvenile and suffering from Down's syndrome, is not an ordinary defendant. Unlike most other cases of blasphemy where charges are mostly made on a single accusation without any supporting evidence, there was plenty of evidence that Masih was being falsely accused. And above all, the case received wide spread media attention, both locally and internationally, which led witnesses to come out and increased the pressure on Pakistani officials. It is highly likely that it were these circumstances that led to justice for Masih.

Based on these events, Hoffman projects his own analysis on the issue of blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Using Masih's case, he digs out articles from the Pakistani constitution of 1973 which were amended countless times during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. Many of these articles have made it extremely difficult for those accused of blasphemy to seek justice.

Hoffman also provides several references to other cases of blasphemy in Pakistan in his paper, most notable of them being the murders of Salman Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti. He tries to untangle the complexity surrounding these assassinations and offers reasons as to why the executors of these high-profile murders either remain at large or are have received widespread support from Pakistani Muslims for their 'courageous' acts.

An estimated number of 1,274 people have been charged under the stringent blasphemy laws of Pakistan between 1986, from when they were included in the Constitution by General Zia-ul-Haq, until 2010 (Siddiqi, 2013). There have been some covert attempts to amend these laws in the last few years but without fruit. Politicians have been killed and lawmakers have received life-threats for trying to amend the law or even for supporting someone accused of blasphemy. With all these complexities of the issue in mind, Matt Hoffman offers an extraordinary analysis of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and suggests why legislative amendments and landmark acquittals will never be enough to achieve true reform as far as blasphemy laws are concerned. To address the issue we will need to alleviate the tensions that exist between our system of governance and fundamental religious notions.



The case of Rimsha remained at the center of media debates for some time. It was one of the rare occasions when media personnel brought up the issue in their talk shows and did follow-ups of the story. This time around, the guests at these shows were also more open about discussing the issue and their arguments were logically structured. However, the constant fear of backlash from secular elements in the society did not allow these people to dissect the issue of blasphemy laws thoroughly. Most of these persons appearing on television were conscious in choosing their words and avoided touching too many angles of the story. Nonetheless, the entire episode was still a short-lived fresh breath of air.

Amjad Mahmood Khan takes up the particular case of Ahmadis in his research paper titled "Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan: An Analysis under International Law and International Relations". The author begins by highlighting the constant hardships faced by Ahmadis in Pakistan and professes that most of the atrocities are even encouraged by the country's leadership. Those stories aside, the paper's main focus is an analysis of two questions; whether Pakistan has violated international covenants and customary law in promulgating the anti-blasphemy provisions in its Penal Code; and whether the international community can intervene on behalf of Ahmadis in Pakistan, given that the majority of the country's people seem to favour the anti-blasphemy provisions currently in place.

Khan brings to light some key questions that do make you "think". For instance, he asks that if Pakistan advocates the Article 55(c) of the UN Charter and Article 18 of the UDHR, why it constitutionalized Ordinance XX and the Criminal Law Act of 1986. It is important to bear in mind here that Article 18 guarantees the right to freedom of thought, including in teaching, practice and worship. Ordinance XX, on the other hand, criminalizes anyone who thinks critically about Holy Prophet Muhammad and manifests his thoughts words or by visible representations. Solid references like these throughout the article add a lot of weight to the writer's argument and the resulting interpretation is very strong.

What Khan does throughout his research paper is to highlight international laws that Pakistan has signed and the contradiction it has created with the blasphemy laws of Pakistan, particularly those dealing with Ahmadis. So in its essence, the article is more slanted towards the legal side of the issue with the author highlighting various laws and then comparing them with Pakistan's anti-Ahmadi laws. This piece of valuable reading will be reflected in my own research.

It wouldn't be wrong to suggest that Ahmadis are one of the most persecuted minorities in Pakistan. Qasim Rashid in his book, "The Wrong Kind of Muslim" provides a very deep analysis of these persecutions. It reflects on the issues that forced Ahmadis to be declared non-Muslims and brings to light stories that are heart-wrenching. Rashid is himself an Ahmadi who had to flee Pakistan because of the threat to his life in this country. He is one of the thousands of Ahmadis who left the country fearing their lives were unsafe here. Had Khan benefitted from this book, the perspective of research may have been more broad. The paper only focuses on the legal aspect and fails to touch the core issues that have resulted in such senseless persecution of this peaceful group.

3. Methodology

The study was exploratory in nature. Newspapers served as a research instrument for this study. Newspaper group approach was used. To acquire the objectives of the study, Content analysis technique was implemented. Berelson (1952) defined Content analysis as:

"A research technique that is objective, systematic, quantitative and manifest content."



In order to investigate the problem, two leading English and two Urdu Newspapers of Pakistan have been selected i.e. The Express Tribune, Dawn, Nawa-e-Waqt and Jang. Newspapers editions from January 2014 till December 2014 were taken for this research. A total of 67 news stories from all the 4 newspapers, which covered the issues of minorities falling under blasphemy laws in Pakistan. All the news and views on front, back and op-ed pages of the newspapers were analyzed and counted by the researcher. In this research paper, news and views constituted the sampling unit. Probability sampling technique was employed for the selection of opinionated pieces. The quantitative analysis was the main consideration of the study. The purpose was to know the number or frequency and length of the content. Framing was applied in this study to reveal how minority's image, in the perspective of blasphemy laws were framed in Pakistani newspapers in terms of Positive, Negative or Neutral framing.

The inclination was measured to know the press coverage was pro - minorities or anti-minorities and Neutral.

News stories were appropriately divided into two respective types. News items that contained hardcore element were included in hard news and those which showed a lighter side were included in soft news.

Appeals were categorized as per Aristotle's categorization of appeals as Logos and Pathos.

Headlines of news stories are divided into three classes; namely favourable, unfavourable and Neutral.

Frequency includes the number of all the news and views.

Only valid and complete sample were made part of the final analysis. The information was first collected and then converted into the form of numerical data through SPSS. SPSS has been used in this research to analyze the data statistically according to the coding used.

Project Findings

Total news and views in front, back and OPED pages of the chosen papers. I.e. Dawn, Express Tribune, Jang and Nawa-e-waqt.

Newspapers	Frequency
Express tribune	14
% within all Newspaper	20.89%
Dawn	16
% within all Newspaper	23.88%
Nawaiwaqt	17
% within all Newspaper	25.37%
Jang	20
% within all Newspaper	29.85%
Total	67

Table 1: Frequency distribution of news stories in the selected newspapers



News Stories	Number
English news papers	30
Urdu News papers	37
Total	67

Table 2: Language wise frequency distribution of the published news stories

News stories	Number
Express tribune	14
Dawn	16
Nawai e waqt	17
Jhang	20
Total no of news stories in English newspapers	30
Total	67

Table 3: Distribution of stories in all four selected newspapers.

The total number of news stories of minorities' acts falling under blasphemy is 67, which are the compilation of all 4 newspapers Urdu and English. As its evident in the representation express tribune represent the least number of stories which is 14 and Jang represent the highest number of stories which is 20, whereas dawn represent 16 and Nawa-iwaqt 17 which shows a close similarity to each other.

Division in Both English Newspapers	Number of news stories
Express tribune	14
Dawn	16
Total	30

Table 4: Distribution of Stories among English Newspapers

As its evident in the table above express tribune shows a lower number of news stories which is 14 comparing with Dawn which is 16

Division in Both Urdu Newspapers	Number of news stories
Nawai e waqt	17
Jhang	20
Total	37

Table 5: Distribution of Stories among Urdu Newspapers

As its evident in the table above Nawai e waqt shows a lower number of news stories, which is 17 comparing with Jang, which is 20.

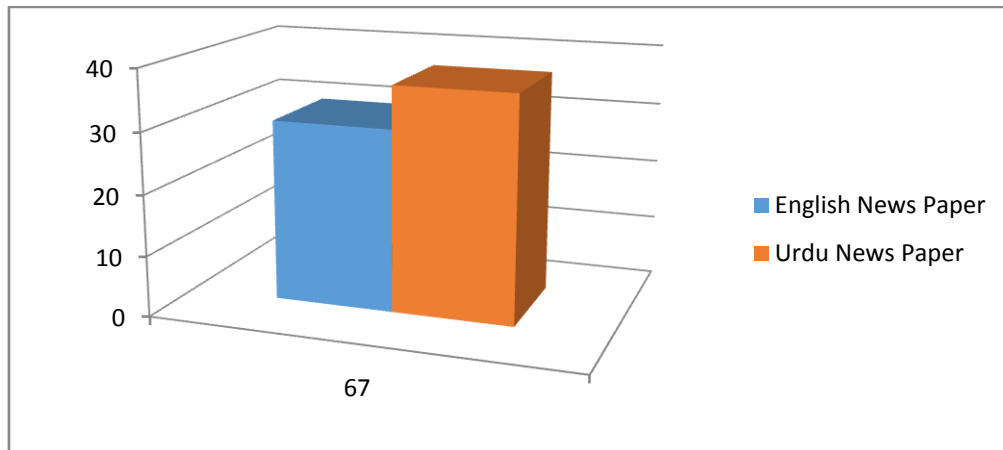


Figure 1: Frequency of the News and Views

The total number of news stories of minorities' acts falling under blasphemy is 67, which are the compilation of all 4 newspapers, Urdu and English.

As its evident in the representation, express tribune represents the least number of stories which is 14 and Jang represents the highest number of stories which is 20, whereas Dawn represent 16 and Nawa-i-waqt 17, which shows a close similarity to each other.

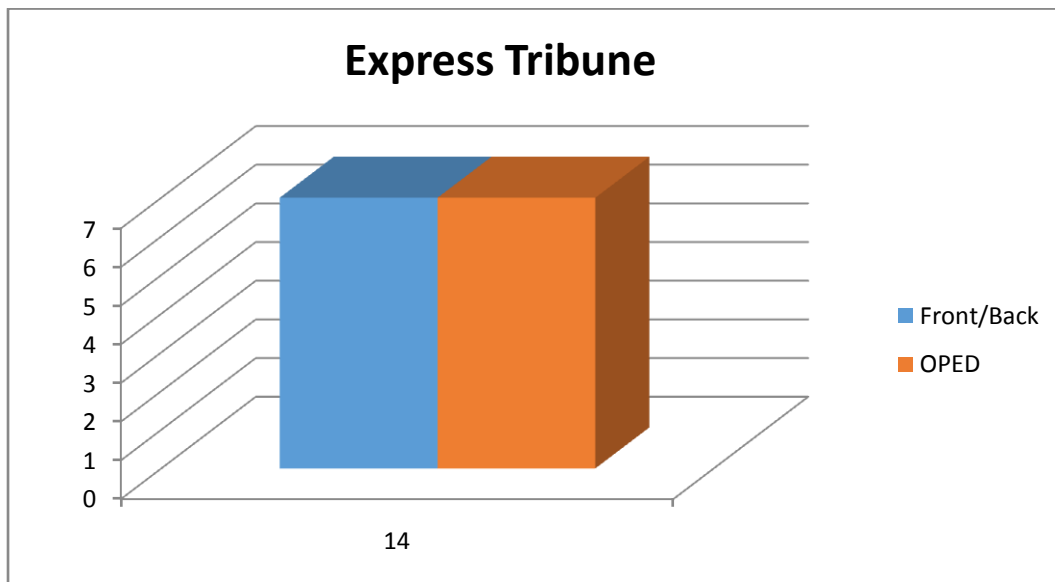


Figure 2: Frequency of the News and Views in Express Tribune

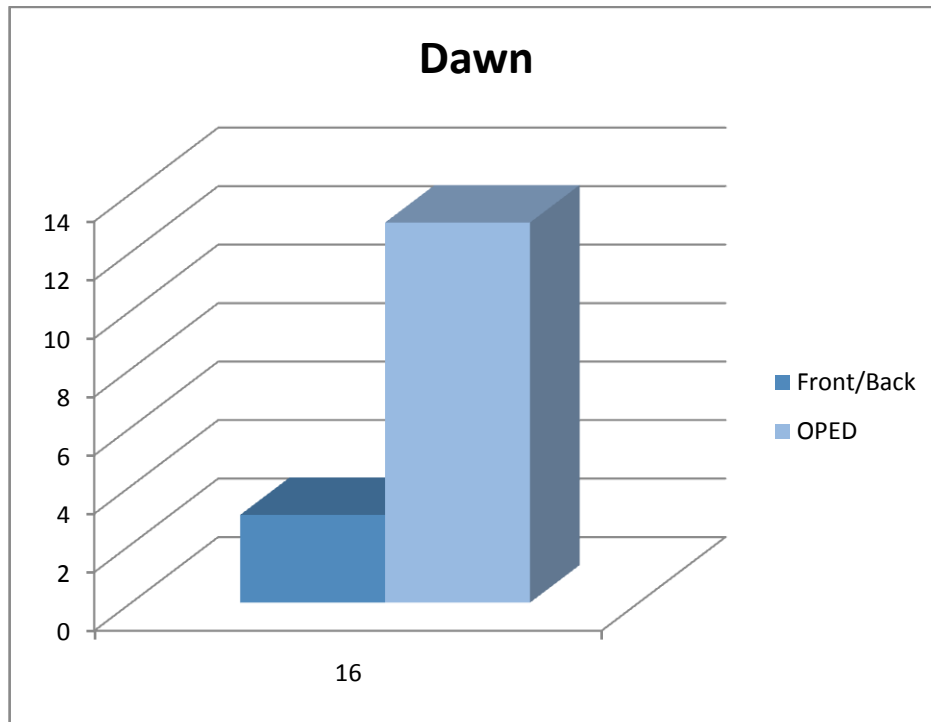


Figure 3: Distribution of News and Views in Dawn

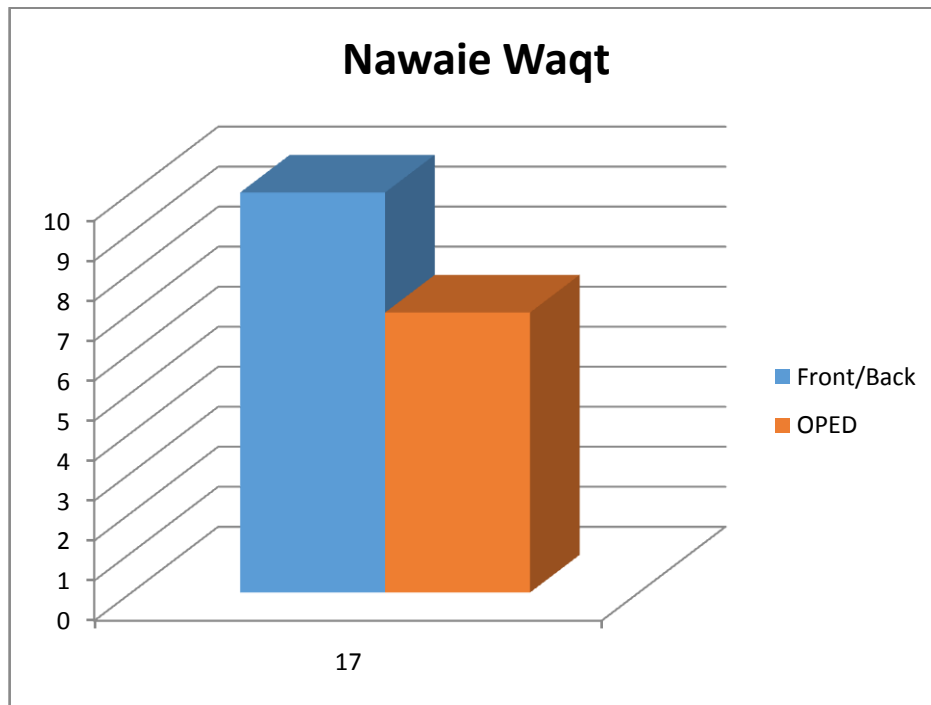


Figure 4: Frequency of the News and Views in Nawa-e-Waqt

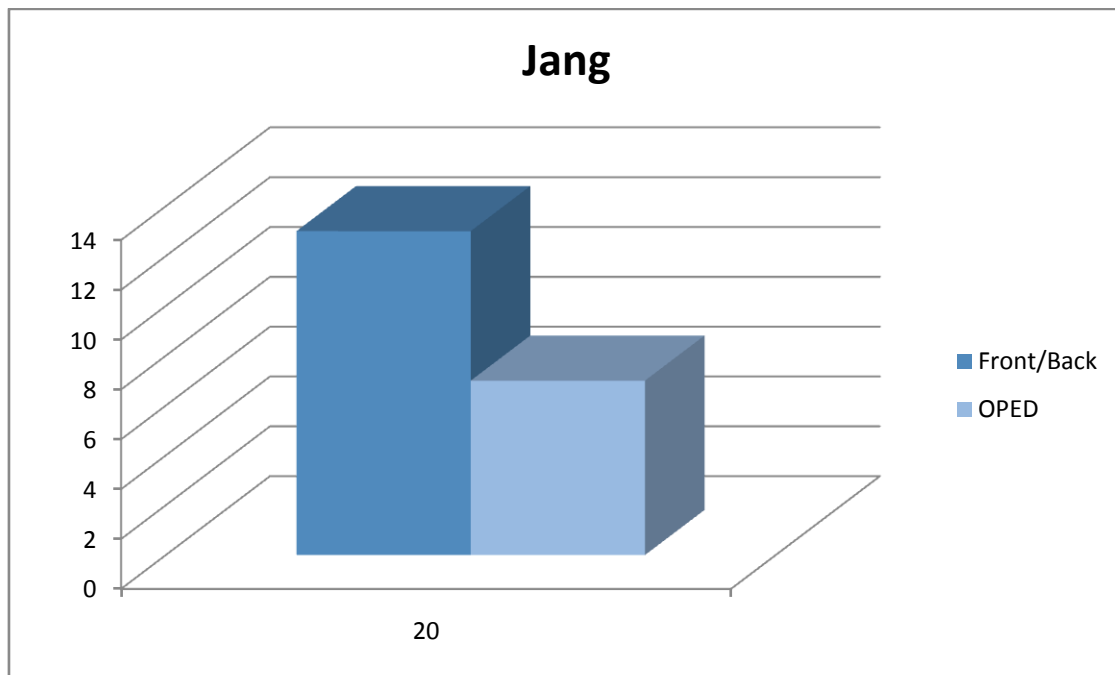


Figure 5: Frequency of News and Views in Jang

The graph represents variation in all 4 newspapers, Express Tribune shows an equal average number of news stories taken from front/back and OPED, whereas Dawn news shows a clear difference representing more OPED than the other news stories. Similarly, comparing Urdu newspaper with each other the graph seems to represent a balance between OPED and news taken from front/back, which represent less OPED a more news stories on front/back page.

Newspapers	Pro-minority	Anti-minority	Neutral	Total
Express tribune	8	2	4	14
% within Newspaper	57.14%	14.28%	28.57%	100%
Dawn	7	5	4	16
% within Newspaper	43.75%	31.25%	25%	100%
Nawaiwaqt	9	6	2	17
% within Newspaper	52.94%	35.29%	11.76%	100%
Jang	11	5	4	20
% within Newspaper	55%	25%	20%	100%
Total	35	18	14	67

Table 6: DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS STORIES IN PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER IN TERMS OF INCLINATION / SLANT PROJECTED

In English News paper	30
In Urdu Newspaper	37

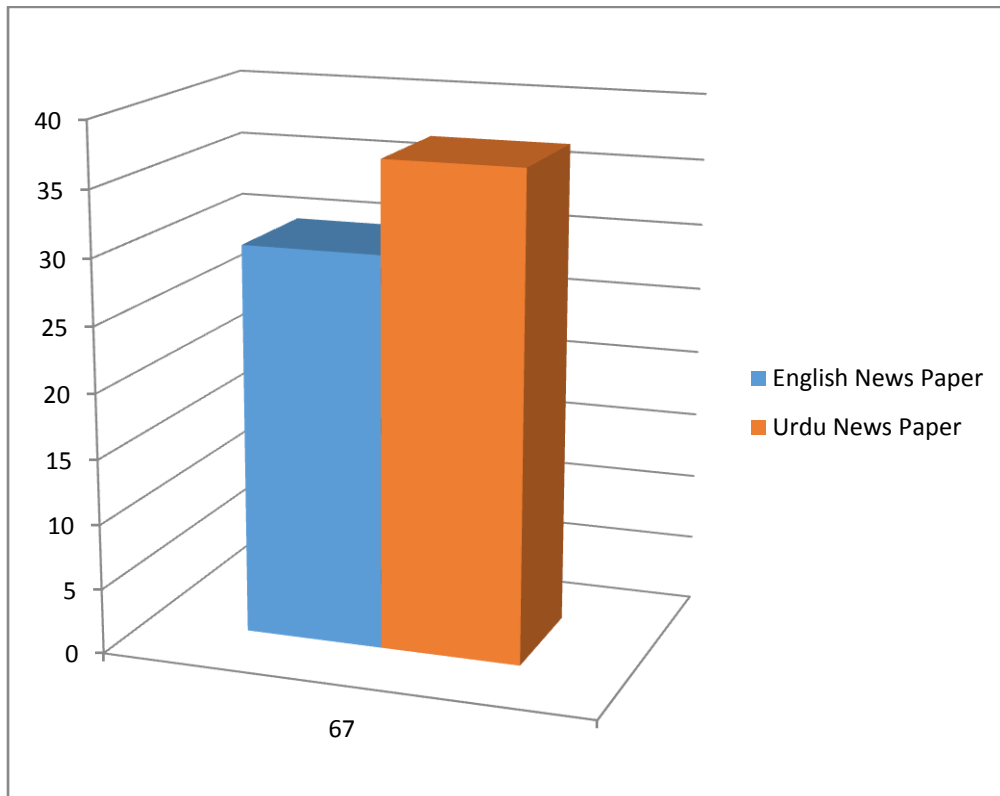


Figure 6: Shows the slant of English and Urdu Newspapers

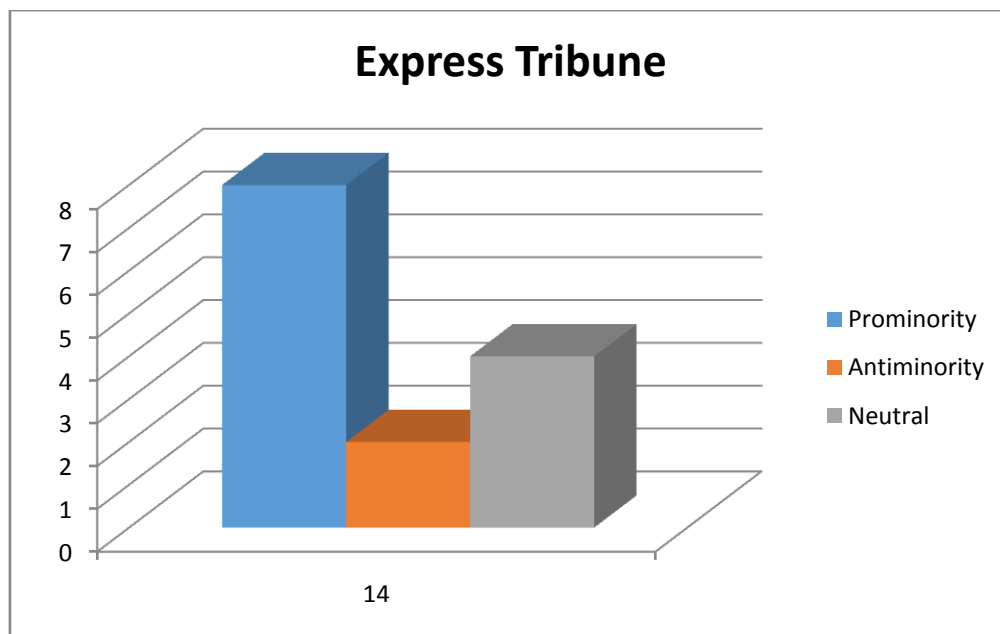


Figure 7: Shows the Slant/Inclination of Express Tribune towards Minority issues

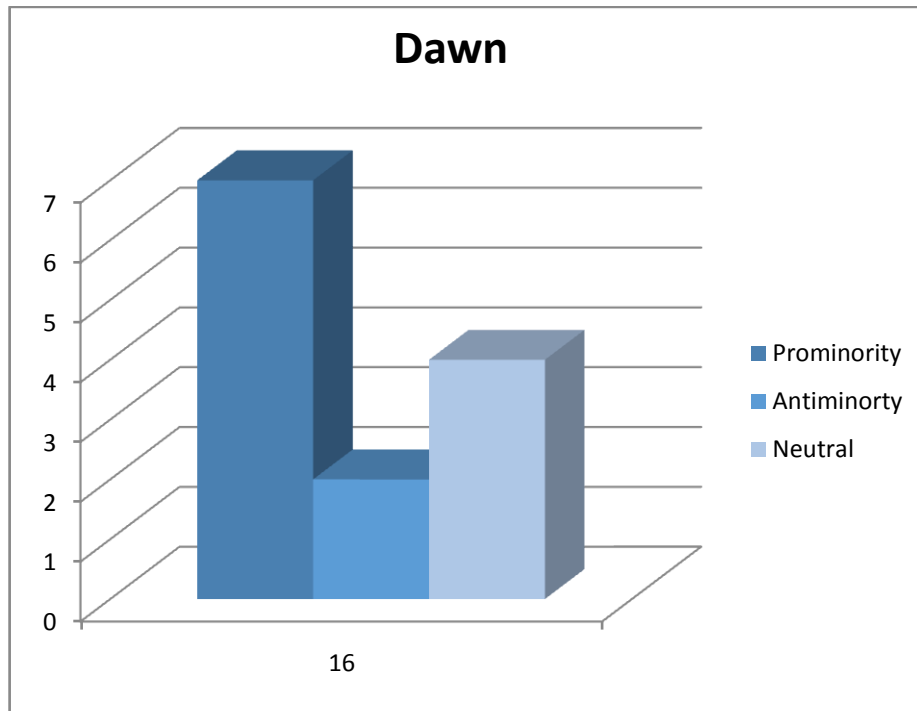


Figure 8: Shows the slant of Dawn towards the Minority Issues in perspective of Blasphemy laws

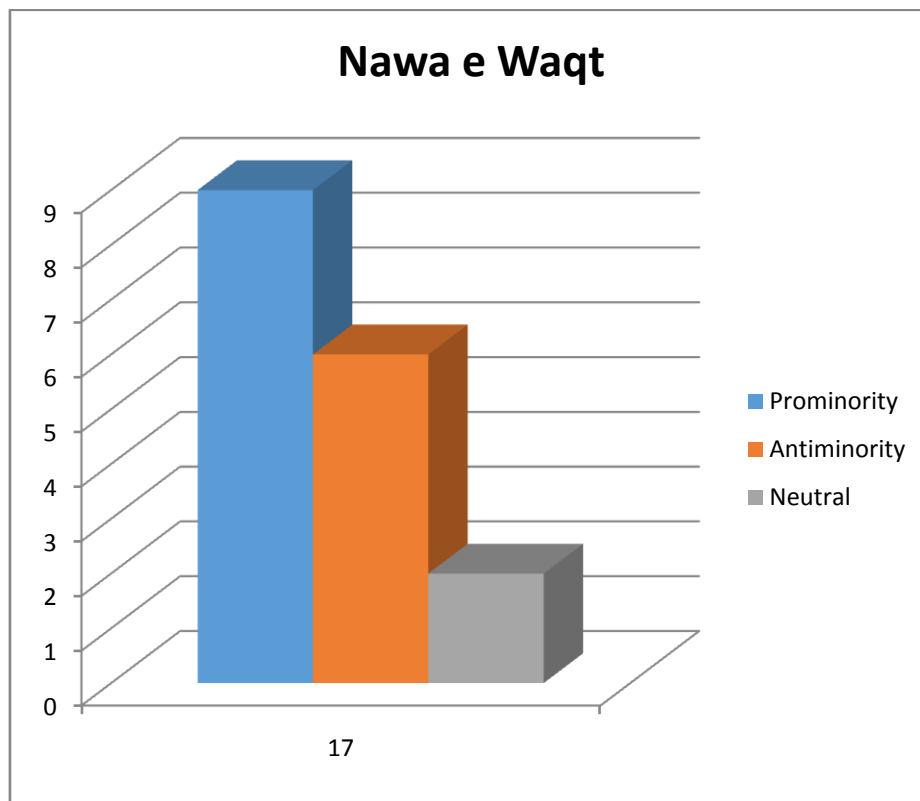


Figure 9: Slant of Nawa-e-Waqt

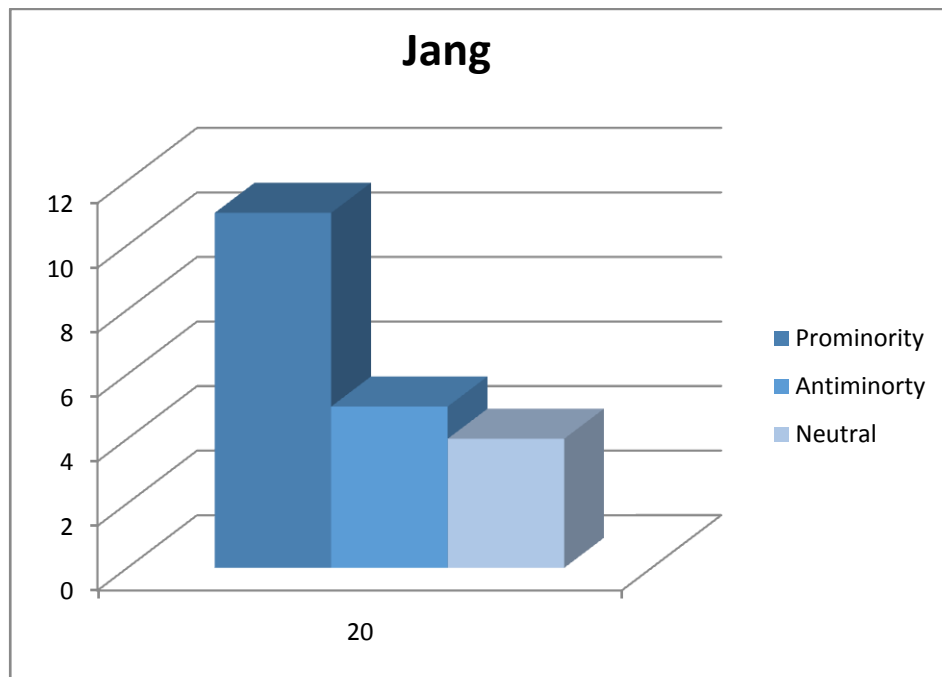


Figure 10: Represents the Slant of Jang News

As its prominent in the table above the English newspapers represent a overall pro-minority number as 15 whereas anti-minority stories are 7 in all and neutral 8. Express tribune have a higher number of pro-minority news stories which is 8 comparing with dawn which is 7, whereas the anti-minority shows the opposite result showing Dawn news having more news stories which is 5 and express tribune is 2. Both news shows a neutral number of news, which is 4 in both news. Therefore the overall news stories counts to 30. the figure shows more pro-minority news stories which 15 and neutral is being 8 and 7 anti-minority news stories.

The inclination shows a variation between Urdu and English news stories graphs. All 4 newspapers present a higher number of pro minority news stories, the graph decreases for anti minority news stories in English Newspaper compare to Urdu, which is showing an increase in the stories. The neutral News shows an opposite trend representing more neutral news stories in English newspapers comparing to Urdu, which represents a relative lower number of neutral news stories.

Image

Newspapers	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Express tribune	7	2	5	14
% within Newspaper	50%	14.28%	35.71%	100%
Dawn	0	16	0	16
% within Newspaper	0%	100%	0%	100%
Nawaiwaqt	10	7	0	17
% within Newspaper	58.82%	41.17%	0%	100%
Jang	8	7	5	20
% within Newspaper	40%	35%	25%	100%
Total	25	32	10	67

Table 7: DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS STORIES IN PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER IN TERMS OF IMAGE PROJECTED

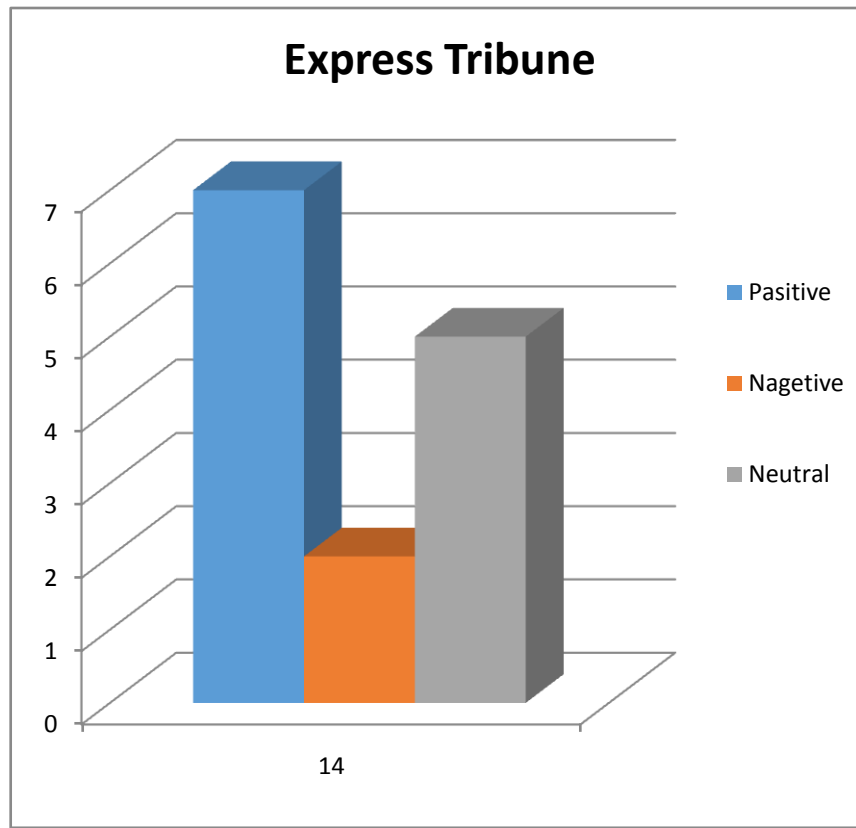


Figure 10: The distribution of positive, Negative and Neutral image in Express Tribune

Story Types

Newspapers	Hard	Soft	Total
Express tribune	7	7	14
% within Newspaper	50%	50%	100%
Dawn	3	13	16
% within Newspaper	18.75%	81.25%	100%
Nawaiwaqt	10	7	17
% within Newspaper	58.82%	41.17%	100%
Jhang	13	7	20
% within Newspaper	65%	35%	100%
Total	33	34	67

Table 8: Distribution Of News Stories In Pakistani Newspaper In Terms Of Types Projected

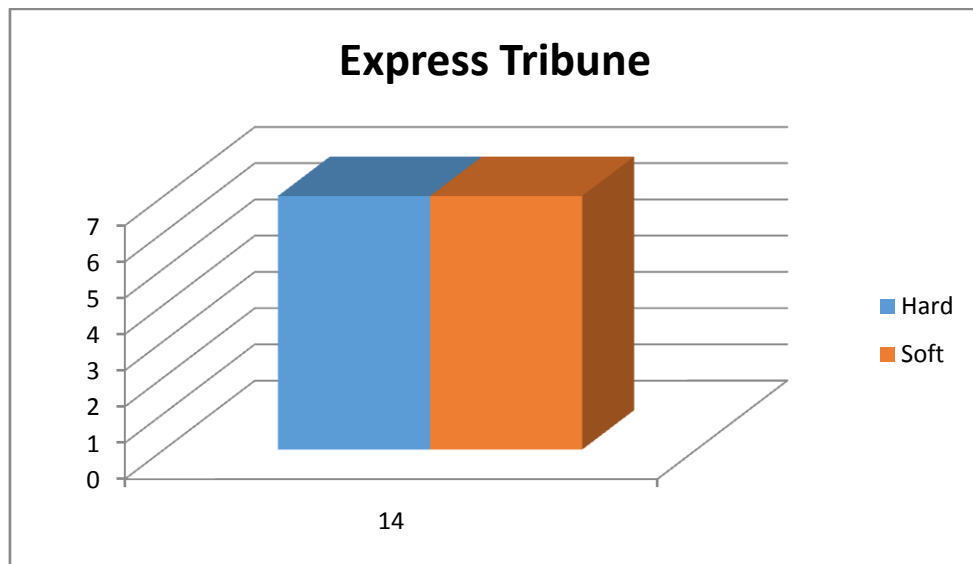


Figure 14: Shows the distribution of hard and Soft story types in Express Tribune which is equal

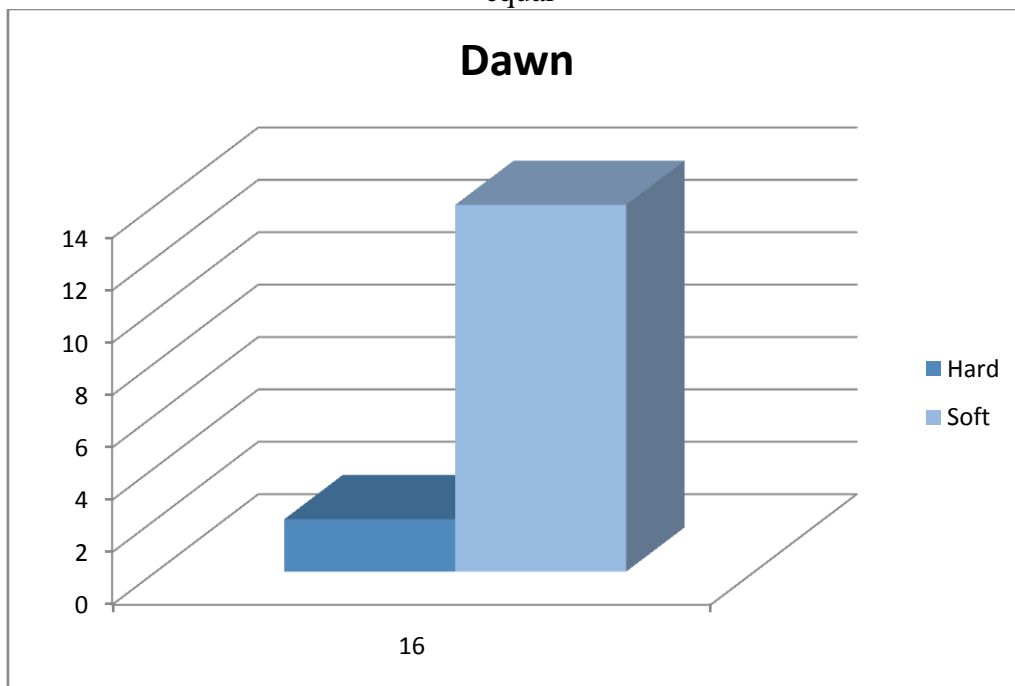


Figure 15: represents the Dawn Newspaper and its distribution of hard and soft story types in which the number of Soft Stories is way higher

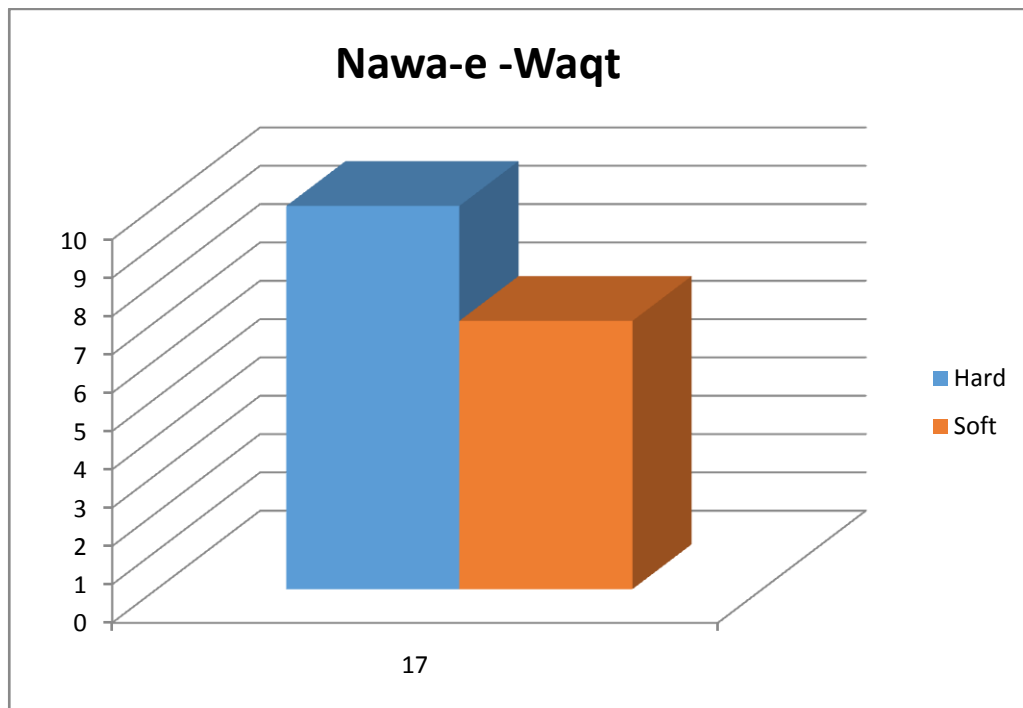


Figure 16: The distribution of Hard and Soft stories in Nawa-e-Waqt

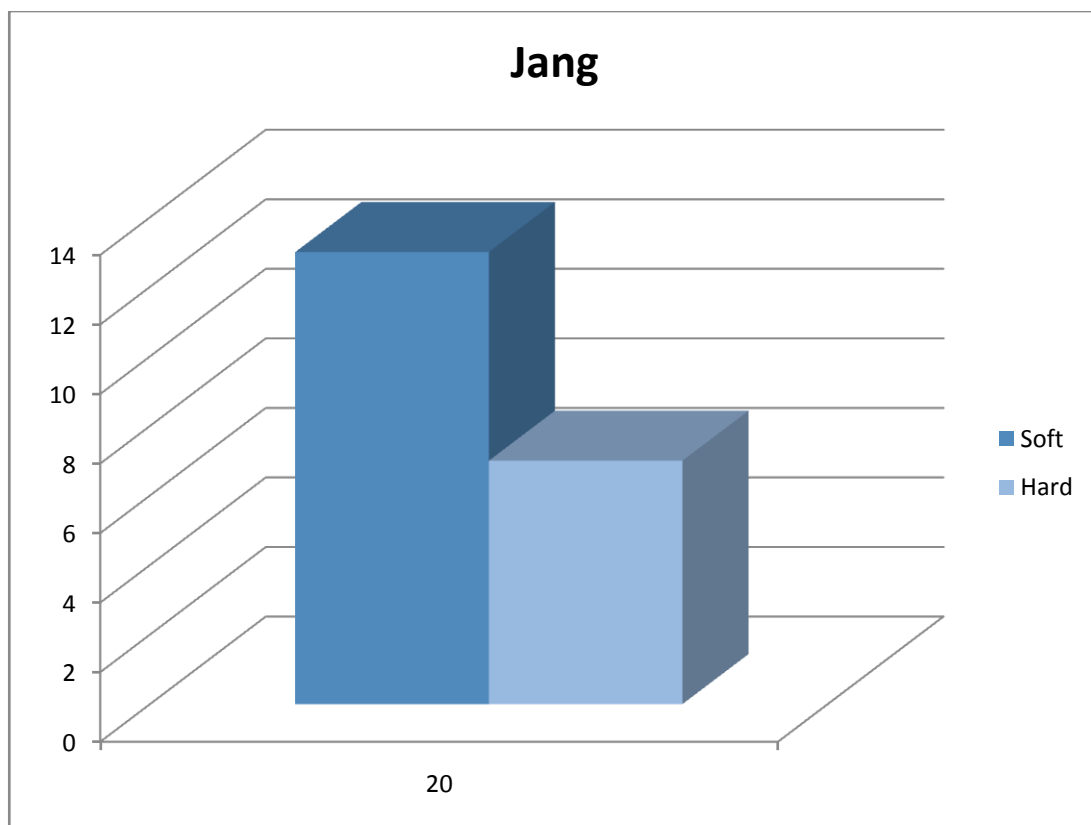


Figure 17: In Jang newspaper the distribution of soft news is higher than the hard news

English newspapers represent a variation in the types of new e.g express tribune graph representing an equal number of hard and soft news whereas Dawn hardly has any hard news,



they likely to show a soft representation. Comparing it with Urdu newspapers, they seem to have more hard news than soft.

Conclusion

Pakistan's blasphemy law has been debated and argued for years now. The issue has made headlines in the media for years and has lead to questionable restrictions on freedom of expression. Leaders of minority groups and human rights activists have criticized the country's blasphemy law for long, claiming them to be disproportionately harsh for the minorities. The media, too, has remained at the center of the debate since it is believed to be mute over the issue. This research was carried out to assess whether these allegations were true or mere fabrications.

For this purpose, the print media was closely studied for a year to verify these claims. First and foremost, the total number of stories in all four newspapers was 67 news items appearing in 365 days. This makes a total of 5.5 news per month. The total number i.e. 67 in 365 days in four papers may look meager but this should be kept in mind that the news and views taken into account were only related to blasphemy law. Therefore this is rather encouraging that newspapers did report all the incidents happened in this time period. The categories used in the study were to see if the news and views of the chosen papers had inclinations towards or against minorities or the news were hard or soft.

The researcher found that all the chosen papers' inclination was towards the minorities when covering the blasphemy related issues. Although, the number of news and views related to minorities in perspective of blasphemy law are more in number yet, English newspapers are more into favoring the minorities than Urdu papers.

There is more hard news in Urdu yet more soft news in English newspapers. This shows that English newspapers are more active in favoring the minorities.

The results of the research suggested that minorities were being portrayed favorably, at least in many news stories. This suggests that a potential for positive coverage of the minorities nonetheless remains there. Like the Muslim majority, minority groups are into a lot of development activities taking place in the country and their contribution is valuable. Highlighting such activities in greater number will portray a soft image of minority groups and increase the level of tolerance in the general masses. Even blasphemy related news stories have the potential to be highlighted in a neutral manner, which if applied by editors can not only dilute the gravity of the matter but will allow fair trial to the accused they.

After 9/11, the international media spewed hate about Muslims creating a global dislike for the religion. Non-Muslims saw Muslims as terrorists and barbaric. The media remained at the forefront in shaping these views, therefore increasing the level of hate for Muslims among Americans. Muslims in US continue to face serious discrimination ever since. The same applies to Pakistan. The more the negative coverage, the greater is the hate for these groups among the masses. Mob violence may be just one example. In light of these facts one can safely assume that the local print media should do more than sheer reporting in educating the masses.

In a nutshell, the print media of Pakistan acting as professionally as it should when it comes to portraying minority issues, especially blasphemy-related cases. Reporting on their social achievements and welfare goals is also very important in order to make them less, vulnerable to violence. News stories in which they are projected negatively, increasing the level of hatred for them should definitely be reported but in a subtle way. However, some news stories do portray them unfavorably, which keeps the situation diluted. Only if the print



media starts giving wider coverage to them when it comes to positive aspects, the papers can do a lot in creating the much-needed harmony in the country.

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