The Media, Prejudice and Islamophobia: How Islam and Muslims are Represented in the Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT: The goal of this investigation is to figure out how Religion and Spirituality are represented in the British media. The author points out that the British Muslim community is depicted as "a foreign other" in the press. As a result of this misrepresentation, it is suggested that the formation of a "racist," specifically Islamophobia, may be traced back to cultural representations of the "other." Accordingly, the article provides a summary/overview of how ethnic minorities have been portrayed in the British press, and argues that the portrayal of British Muslims and Islam follows these themes of 'deviance' and 'un-Britishness'. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, early studies investigated the media's concern about "race" as an issue, as well as the racialization of "immigrants" in particular. A number of studies have used various forms of content analysis in connection to the provincial and local press, major papers, the modern media, and local radio, among other things.

KEYWORDS: Immigrant, Islam, Islamophobia, Media, Prejudice.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines how the media in the United Kingdom portrays Muslims, a minority population. Although, in theory, British Muslims are a diverse community with many different ethnic origins, in practice, they are a homogeneous bunch. Modood goes on to say that political, cultural, and economical factors exacerbate this variability. According to Modood, the word Muslim, like British or Christian, contains considerable internal variety. Despite these issues, it is nevertheless a useful classification for helping to distinguish those who are at the center of public attention, the "visible minority." Although popular concern about Muslims and Islam may be observed in media representations, the need of considering and debating these portrayals becomes even more evident [1].

To support this argument, the article will describe contemporary worries about Muslim minority as cultural racism. Muslims will be accused of being un-British. This is consistent with previous research on British national identity, which argues that ethnic minorities in the UK are seen as not British. There have been debates about who is or is not "British" in recent years, and these concerns have shifted to larger debates about the difficulty of a diverse society. These worries over who is "British" are understandable in light of the media's portrayal of minorities. The article examines past studies on how the media portrays minorities, with a focus on how the media portrays British Muslims and/or Islam.

The portrayal of British Muslims in the media is said to mirror prior studies on how minority groups are represented in the media. The media's portrayal of minority groups is a "double-edged sword" in many ways. First, it marginalizes minority voices, making them practically invisible or unheard. Simultaneously, real minority group representation is often interpreted in negative discourses. These ideas are essential for media outlets in that they become the only source of knowledge for viewers with little social contact with minority groups. Researchers believes that the media's role is important in spreading, explaining, and expressing certain discourses that empower minority groups [2].

Ahmed observed in 1993 that many Muslims were concerned about the poor portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western media. However, as a result of events such as the Salman Rushdie issue, the first Gulf War, and 9/11, interest in media portrayals of Islam has increased. A growing amount of evidence suggests that images, representations, and discourses about Islam/Muslims in mainstream Western media are overwhelmingly negative and antagonistic. Several studies have looked at the particular connection between media and Islam, including portrayals of Muslim minority in the West and other media coverage of Muslims and Islam [3].

In brief, this article summarizes prior studies on the portrayal of minority groups in the British press and then claims that British Muslims and Islam are portrayed similarly. These portrayals may be related to problems of

shifting racist discourses as well as national identity concerns. Thus, study of how British Muslims are portrayed in the news reveals that they are seen as the "foreign inside" British society.

1.1 Concerns Both Domestically and Overseas:

Recent scholarly study on the portrayal of immigration and asylum problems in the British media has shown the underlying themes of race and nationalism that dominate media reportage. Gilroy has argued that the 'new racism' has effectively removed itself from basic ideas of biological inferiority in the last 20 years.

While Greenslade is accurate in stating that Moore's comments are indicative of the UK press's overall attitude to issues of immigration, these remarks were made as a result of The Observer, a small circulation journal renowned for its right-wing and outspoken opinions. Historically, British people of color have often been portrayed in the media with narrow portrayals and situations where there was dissent and deviance. In the 1960s and 1970s, research looked at how immigrants were reported in connection to 'numbers' issues and 'racial relations' conflicts. In the 1970s and 1980s, representations tended to criminalize Britain's black population, ignoring social inequalities and growing outrage at police tactics, and the 1990s saw attacks on anti-racist organizations, vilifications of black representatives, and the apparent endorsement of "new racism" by prominent politicians, actively disparaging attempts to further multicultural and anti-racist apolitical goals. The contemporary portrayal of asylum seekers and British Muslim communities seems to continue the pattern of labelling non-white groups as un-British [4].

1.2 Race and Media:

A good example of this is the media's treatment of the concept of race and ethnicity. The media plugs in the information gaps on race and ethnicity when it comes to public consciousness. Although the UK has two million black residents, they are clustered in just a few big cities, thus they are not well integrated with the white majority. According to research on the media's coverage of race throughout the years, it has been restricted in its topics and negative in its substance. Minority representation research in the United Kingdom may be divided into two phases that are separate but complimentary. Minority groups are often stereotyped in negative ways, from Afro-Caribbeans' "criminal mindset" to "cheating Asians" and "Islamic fanatics."

However, there are exceptions, as cultural minorities have increasingly been represented in recent British television through time. These results imply that conceptions are in constant flux, and that diversity and the creation of new ethnicities have significant influence in the modern world. According to Cottle, it is essential to understand the media's role in ethnic minority representations in terms of the concept of multiculturalism [5].

1.3 Influence of Media:

Policing the Crisis states that Hall adheres to a neo-Marxist ideology of media racism. Hall thinks that significant news and appropriate viewpoints are defined by factors such as what politicians, business leaders, and others feel is important. Many individuals have similar opinions, and their viewpoints carry significant influence in media and society. This is because these opinions inform conceptions of news values, good journalism, and other like concepts. By this, I mean that government media channels do the first heavy lifting.

They therefore have the ability to influence the treatment process for all future therapeutic efforts. According to Schlesinger, this prevailing paradigm of politics, although focused on the idea of dominating ideology, ignores the fact that in many instances there is no one descriptor of the importance of a political issue or event. Schlesinger's primary argument is that "those who set the political agenda are less divided than those who set the political agenda."

Schlesinger and Miller argue that the main meanings of media change throughout time, and they emerge as a consequence of complex negotiation processes between various social actors. Van Dijk uses the term "primary definers" to explain that the journalists are the ruling class of society. Even while he admits that the media and other social actors are at odds, he argues that there is a racial and ethnic consensus. As Van Dijk sees it, these extra social actors might be classed as elites. This sociopolitical elite, which is mainly white and has influence over political, economic, social, and cultural spheres, controls decisions that affect ethnic minorities' day-to-day life. All in all, when it comes to information about ethnicity, there is little to no threat to the status quo, because the dominant elite can easily get this information. Cottle rejects this notion, suggesting that causes for exclusion that stem from history and structure may not be racist [6].

1.4 Innovative Media:

Published content analyses of gender roles have seldom addressed gender representations in so-called "new media," as noted in the introductions to these special issues, and the same is true of the research in this special issue. Traditional media such as television, cinema, music, and newspapers are the emphasis of the papers presented. However, the media environment is changing at a breakneck speed, with new kinds of media, as well as new channels for delivering information, continuously developing. Music, television, gaming, and films are among the formerly "other media" that are now accessible on the Internet. Furthermore, material may now be watched or utilized on computers, mp3 players, portable video players, mobile phones, and television sets. Adults consume a wide range of media and are increasingly engaging with it across many channels. Adolescents, in particular, are immersed in this kind of material[7].

In 2009, the Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a study of more than 2,000 young people aged 8 to 18 years old from throughout the United States on their media use. Each day, youth spent a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes on different media. Television remained the most popular medium among teenagers, accounting for almost 4.5 hours of media time. Music/audio came in second, with approximately 2.5 hours of usage. Nonetheless, emerging media, such as computer and video game usage, accounted for 1.5 and 1.25 hours of media time for adolescents, respectively. Mobile platforms such as cell phones, laptops, and portable game players were used by a significant minority (20%) of media consumers (about 2 hours). In comparison to White children, Black and Hispanic youth spend somewhat more time with most of these activities, just as they did with conventional media. We know very little about modern media material or how it differs based on the device used to view it. As a result, it is essential that academics begin carefully studying them.

As with conventional media, new media allows for content exposure. However, it also provides an opportunity to produce and disseminate material. Sixty-four percent of online adolescents aged 12 to 17 have produced and uploaded material on the internet, which includes anything from having a personal website to blogging and uploading artwork, pictures, and videos. New media also gives people the chance to openly comment on how they are portrayed. Many online activities, such as social networking, email, chat room participation, and instant messaging, are highly social in comparison to traditional media use, as are video games that can be played by multiple online players and use voice over protocols to allow conversation between these players[8].

These distinct characteristics of modern media pose a few more issues worth investigating. In particular, much as the gender of people who generate professionally produced media influences the content made by users in interactive settings, whether videos, blogs, or comments on such, gender influences the material created by users in interactive environments. As a result, it's critical to keep track of this material as well as the gender of those who participate in various media platforms and content categories. Girls spend more time on social networking sites than males do now, and they spend less time playing games, viewing videos, or uploading them.

1.5 Muslim and British:

Interest in the whole Muslim population in the United Kingdom skyrocketed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A sequence of events, beginning with national problems like the Rushdie controversy and international ones like the 1991 Gulf War, pushed Muslims into the public limelight and negatively impacted the Muslim community in the UK. New elements of racist language emerged, and they were employed in a way that might be claimed was intended to taunt and humiliate other cultural minorities. Numerous social analysts have observed that the vocabulary of the media has been shaped in such a manner that many people now refer to a "criminal society."

The apparent sympathy for bin Laden, Palestinian suicide bombers, and Kashmiri separatists among British Muslims has been bolstered by recent events in the north of England. The riots in the north of England have been portrayed in some places as an issue primarily affecting the Muslim population, rather than the British Asian community as a whole.

In the media, Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations have been portrayed as separatist, insular, and reluctant to assimilate with the rest of society. Furthermore, the previous stereotype of 'Asian passivity' has been replaced with a more militant aggressive identity that is intended to be at conflict with 'British secular culture.' The term "cultural conflict" has been revived to suggest that British Muslims are at war with the rest of society. It's also been argued

that the focus on Muslims' unwillingness to assimilate into British society has led to a rethinking of multiculturalism as a whole[9].

1.6 Islamophobia:

Sardar claims that Islam's unwillingness to be absorbed by Western values and political and cultural networks has basically created a dilemma for the Western universal goal of globalization. On some levels, this unwillingness to conform with the West and its way of life, as well as a lack of shared values and common sense views, has culminated in a dread of an alleged Islamic danger.

Many of the ideas presented in this discussion are very alarming and come with racist, xenophobic, and misinformed undertones. Anti-Muslimism is a wide philosophy, which may be difficult to separate from other ideologies and concepts. Those targeted are people who make up Muslim groups and their Islamic identity, actual or assumed, is a target of discrimination. In this sense, prejudice against Muslims frequently shares ground with ethnic discrimination, including groups such as Albanians, Palestine, and Caucasians, who are non-Muslim in composition.

It appears that Halliday believes anti-Muslimism is indeed a new form of racism that's based on religious characteristics as well as physical traits. The term Islamophobia is incorrect in Halliday's opinion since it is too consistent. According to Halliday, the phrase suggests that there is just one religion and that all Muslims are the same. In other words, Halliday contends that the term "Islamophobia" refers to a fright of Islam as a religion reasonably than a fear of Muslims.

However, Halliday recognizes that such intellectual discussions may be ineffective for victims of discrimination. Furthermore, Fekete and Abukahlil remind out that in the aftermath of 9/11, some Muslim opponents have questioned Islamic jihad ideas and Prophet Muhammad's hadiths. The Rushdie controversy, which saw the rise of Islam as a religion questioned, was, according to Modood, the trigger for the development of anti-Muslim bigotry. These arguments got enmeshed in the aforementioned Clash of Civilizations discussion after 9/11 [10].

2. DISCUSSION

Earlier study looked at the media's concern about "race" as an issue, particularly the racialization of "immigrants" in the 1960s and 1970s. A variety of studies in the local and provincial press, national newspapers, entertainment media, and local radio have used various forms of content analysis. In addition, Bagley, Hartmann and Husband have tried to examine the effect of these media representations on representative populations, while Van Dijk has tried to measure the influence of media representation conceptually using discourse analysis and ideas of symbolic racism.

In their research of racism and the media, Harman and Husband have specifically focused on these information sources for what individuals learn about ethnic groups. They discovered that race relations coverage in the national press between 1963 and 1970 tended to focus on signs of racial conflict and paid little attention to black people's access to housing, education, and employment, "competition for which would seem to be among the underlying roots of tension." In other words, immigration and socioeconomic issues were rebranded as a "race" issue. Minority groups were often seen as outsiders who should be kept out of British culture. Hartmann and Husband remark that their book is titled Racism and the Mass Media rather than Racial and the Mass Media because they claim that the issue of race relations in the UK and its media is caused by racism, not race. When social interaction with non-white individuals was restricted, Hartmann and Husband found that ethnic matters were learned through the media.

If 'race' has remained a 'external threat' in relation to immigration 'scares,' resulting in headlines with emotional metaphors such as 'swamping,' 'tidal waves,' and 'floods,' throughout the 1960s and 1970s and continuing up to the present, other studies have noted how the growing number of British-born second- and third-generation immigrants has influenced how they are treated This started with the so-called "criminalization of black youth" and, it might be claimed, has continued in recent years with responses to the Muslim population. Using the concept of the "moral panic," Hall claims that "race" and "crime" news collided. He observes that the reasons of crime are seldom addressed or explored, instead focusing on the consequences. In summary, the violence was emphasized, with the implication that it was intrinsic to West Indian culture, and therefore at odds with the "British way of life." Troyna observes that the media's portrayal of black people was mostly based on the concept of the "outsider inside."

She also observed that the overall image was still negative and ideological: 'cultural distinctions are disparaged in the media's portrayal of reality, and the British black community is viewed as a threat to, and fundamentally different from, the majority of society.' Indeed, according to Van Dijk, the indigenous white population easily applies tales about particular minorities to all minorities. As a result, despite their cultural distinctions, all minorities are classified as homogenous.

3. CONCLUSION

Poole develops the concept of representations of Muslims as non-British, claiming that the emphasis in British media stories is mostly worldwide, and therefore the image of Islam is primarily "foreign." Because of their involvement in deviant activities, the way these topics are framed gives rise to the expression of a few central defining characteristics: that Muslims are a threat to British mainstream values, provoking integrative concerns; that there are inheriting cultural differences between Muslims and the host community, causing tensions in interpersonal relations; and that Muslims are increasingly marginalized. Because ethnic minorities are portrayed as "different," media debates have led to the belief that they are unable to fully engage in British culture. These discourses of the 'other' have contextualized representations of ethnic minorities in the media.

Even when young Muslims want to consider as British, they nevertheless find that other people see them as first and foremost Muslim. Muslims have been portrayed as a minority of potentially false nationals in Britain today, with the escalation of so War against Terror following the events of 9/11. There is a narrative that depicts British Muslims as extremists, fundamentalists, and immigrants, as well as portraying the East as oriental. Although Muslims are often encouraged to assimilate into British society and swear loyalty to the British state, no non-Muslim anti-war group has ever been asked to do the same. To conclude, this article sought to show how the media represents ethnic minorities as strangers in Britain. The development of this racist mentality is built on intellectual thinking, and it manifests in a belief that Britain Muslims are still held captive to foreign Islamic culture.

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