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HOLLYWOOD MOVIES STAMPING OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS: AN ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATION

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Abstract

The majority of countries in the globe have huge Hollywood film audiences, and residents of these nations frequently watch Hollywood blockbusters for enjoyment. Hollywood film imagery has the potential and influence to inspire audiences to consider various social, political, or ideological topics and to form opinions. Hollywood frequently misrepresents and mocks Islam, the second-largest religion in the world, and Muslims, who number more than 1.5 billion. The goal of the current study was to examine how different Muslim communities are portrayed in Hollywood films. The study also looked at how Islamic nations were portrayed in popular culture to see how people perceived Islam. The research design for this study included a qualitative content analysis. Three Hollywood films from 2012 onwards were chosen for examination using the purposive sampling methodology. The findings showed that all Muslim groups were portrayed as being anti-Western. All five of the Islamic nations were portrayed poorly in the films as well. The findings also showed that people in Islamic countries were regarded as uncivilised citizens and that life in those countries was clearly problematic rather than tranquil.

Keywords: Hollywood Movies, Media Representation, Qualitative Research, Innocence of Muslims, Cultivation Theory

Introduction

Most countries throughout the world have a strong presence of Hollywood Movies, and their citizens watch these blockbusters for enjoyment. Hollywood productions may and do influence viewers' thoughts, viewpoints, and attitudes on a range of social, political, and ideological issues. Hollywood films regularly misunderstand and insult Islam, the second-largest religion in the world, and Muslims, who number more than 1.5 billion. The aim of this study was to investigate how Muslims are portrayed in Hollywood films. The study has also made an effort to assess how well-represented Muslim nations are in popular culture. A qualitative content analysis was used as the research methodology for this study.Three Hollywood pieces from the year 2012 and onwards have been chosen for examination using the purposive sample technique. The findings revealed that all divisions of Muslims have been portrayed as anti-West. Likewise, All Islamic countries are shaded grey in the selected movies. Moveover, the findings uncover that life in Muslim societies

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is seen as visibly problematic rather than serene, and their citizens of Islamic countries are depicted as uncivilized.

After Christianity, Islam is the world's second most popular religion. (Simmonds, David, 2014). Muslims account for about 1.7 billion people on the planet, it accounts for over 25% of the global population. (Hackett, Conrad, & Brian J. Grim, 2012) Islam's literal meaning is "submission to God's will." (Khan, Arshad. Islam, 2012) which originates from The Arabic word Muslim carries the meaning of peace and deference. Islam is a nonviolent religion that places a strong emphasis on peace. which was born in a society that was multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious wherein it not survived and flourished, but attracted mass of people to conversion. Islam is a religion of peace, and nonviolence is at its foundation. Islam instructs its adherents to fight for peace. (Pal, Amitabh,2012) In a broader sense, Islam believes that serenity can be achieved by completely surrendering to God's will. (Khan, Arshad., & Islam, 2003)

Though, for centuries, Islam and the West's relationship has been at crossroads and a symbol of adversary due to one or other reasons; however, mainly due to west's inability to accept Islam as a 'new reality' in the world affairs. (Esposito, John L,2002). Long adversarial relations resulted in turning Islam into political Islam that essentially uses itself to achieve a political goal." Other Western titles used to malign Islam include "Revolutionary Islam," "fundamentalist Islam," "radical Islam," "extreme Islam," "militant Islam," "Islamism," and so forth.' To name a few. This variation in terminology points to a number of other features of political Islam that are being examined by Western forces. (Knudsen, Are,2013) The term Islam is not used in the West as a unique term; rather, it is used as a label, a symbol of a violent and radicalized gang. (Said, Edward W,1997)

Continued hatred towards Islam coined another term, i.e. islamophobia, which Runnymede Trust claimed to be using it for the second time in its report released in November 1997 from the UK. The first use of the term, as per Runnymede Report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, was made in a fortnightly periodical *Insight* in February 1991. Nonetheless, that was also a false claim as the term Islamophobia was used in a research piece publish in Journal of Tecnological Studies in 1923; and even before that it was used by Allien Quellien in 1910. (Iqbal, Zafar,2020).

The term islamophobia has been defined in Runnymede Report as "unfounded hatred toward Muslims and so dread or dislike of all or most Muslims."(Morretta, Alison,2016).Anti-Muslim sentiments, sometimes known as Islamophobia, is described as "prejudice towards, hate for or an aversion to Muslims or the Islamist religion" (Arifin, Mohammad Sakib,2017). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Islamophobia is described as "a dislike or phobia of Islam or Muslims, particularly when used as a political tool."(Stevenson, Angus,2010). However, we assume that Islamophobia is a generalized negative posturing towards Islam and Muslims at individual and societal levels.

Contemporarily, Islamophobia is a concept that has become prominent in Western society as a result of the West's inaccurate and unjust reporting of Islam and Muslims' affairs. (Christensen, Christian,2006) The emphasis of Western media that Muslims are radicals stems from ideas of civilizational clashes in which one is unwilling to recognize the existence of another, or in way Islam has been considered as an existential threat to the west and rest. The world is disintegrating as a result of this conflict of civilizations. For

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centuries, the West and Islam have been at war. Shows no signs of abating. And the military-to-military engagement could become more acrimonious. (Huntington, Samuel P,1993).

The US media frequently depicts Islam from a conflict of civilizations angle., drawing specific focus to the differences between Islam and the west, while strange enough is the fact that Islam is a religious ideology and west essentially and primarily a geography demonstrably a bouquet of divergent (and at places differing) cultures. These differences can be seen Islam as a religion and in terms of culture.

According to a survey, Muslims did not view the concern through the lens of religion, but as a political matter instead. Muslims around the world are affected by this type of inaccurate depiction of Islam. The Arab world believes that the American media is entirely focused on portraying Islamic countries as breeding grounds for violence and brutality. (Abdulla, Rasha A,2007).

Film is more significantly more effective auditory visual form than other kinds of media such as radio and television, and has become a superior mode of communication. A film, according to the dictionary, is a sequence of images that tell a story and are typically presented on cinema screens. Despite being a large collection of blocked and still photographs, the movie was created with a motion picture camera to allow viewers to see the images in a way that looks like a real-life scene framed in a movie. viewers to see the pictures in a manner that resembles a real-life scene that has been shot for a movie. The industry of mimicking experiences to deliver stories, ideas, and messages is referred to as cinema. People from all walks of life and from all corners of the globe watch movies in theatres or on television screens at home (Balushi, Iqbal Abdul Qadir Al,2014).

The term "Hollywood" refers to the United States of America's film industry (USA). Hollywood is the world's largest film business, named after the small Californian community in Los Angeles where the majority of the film studios are situated. People of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and nationalities consider it to be among the most well-liked international entertainers. Throughout its films, the movie industry includes numerous images of people of various ethnicities.

Hollywood movie pictures have the capacity and power to empower audiences to generate thoughts, views, and opinions on a number of social, political, and ideological themes based on what people see and how it is perceived. (Brook, Tom,2019) The majority of nations appreciate Hollywood films, and more nations are turning to Hollywood blockbusters for entertainment. Like an octopus, Hollywood has tentacles that swarm throughout the globe. The majority of its income was previously generated by domestic ticket sales in the United States, but in recent years, the importance of international markets has increased. (Simon, Scott j, 2019).

Hollywood films have amused hundreds of millions of people around the globe and have given them new perspectives on a variety of global locales over the past century. Thanks to Hollywood movies that made it possible, people have experienced sights and sounds that would otherwise be difficult to encounter. Films have taken viewers to the earth's interior, outer space (both actual and imagined), and all points in between. Hollywood films are one of the most effective teachers of youth because they typically

present the world and its inhabitants in inaccurate ways. (Dijk, Teun A. Van,1996). The discussion and communication events in the Hollywood film industry and the US mass media are accessible to script writers, editors, reporters, news anchors, producers, directors, studio owners, and a few very famous actors, among others. (Morris, Daniel R,2009)

After the Cold War, a divided globe became a unipolar world dominated by the United States, the war's solitary victor. Years of animosity between the two spheres faded, and the United States claimed being the sole superpower. However, the flimsy peace was only temporary as to be the only superpower. The fragile peace was short-lived, however, as the twin towers of New York were attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, changing the path of history. Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group with its foundation in Afghanistan, was blamed for the 9/11 attacks, and the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invaded Afghanistan and Iraq to avenge the 9/11 catastrophe and punish the perpetrators.

NATO forces, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (Stahl, Roge2009). The threat of terrorism, which affected not just the US but the entire world, was provided to those major players in the Hollywood film business. Because of the apparent threat, less than a month after the attacks, the whole world nearly overwhelmingly supported the US move of invading Afghanistan. (Vanhala, Helena,2018).

Muslims were singled out as the primary victims of the 9/11 attacks because they shared their faith with the perpetrators. A number of movies have been produced to promote and persuade people that these wars are legitimate. and appropriate. The world was led to believe that Muslims are extremists and the terrorists who are to be blamed for the catastrophe.

The general public was made to believe that Muslims are radicals and that the terrorists are to blame for the disaster. Various studies pre- and post-9/11 portrayals of Muslims in films indicated that there was a significant change in how Muslims were portrayed before and after the tragic event. (Balushi, Iqbal Abdul Qadir Al, 2014) Hollywood has long been the most widely watched form of entertainment on the planet. Its films have a global audience and influence a great number of people's opinions. When there is no other option, individuals often resort to violence. People see others purely through the lens of Hollywood in many circumstances where there is no other option. (Gamson, William A., David Croteau, William Hoynes. & Theodore Sasson,1992)

Hollywood plays a vital role in shaping social situation indeed. Islam, the world's second largest religion, and Muslims, , who number over a billion and a half, have long been the targets of Hollywood's "misrepresentation and mockery." As a result, the current research aims to look into such as Muslims are portrayed in Hollywood movies. The study would also look at the way that Islamic nations are portrayed in movies.

Problem Statement

Owing to above discussion, this study primarily aims at evaluating as how Muslims are portrayed in Hollywood films, besides exploring the portrayal of Muslim countries.

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Objectives the study

In a number of films, movies and Islam have been depicted in a negative light or with a large number of minor Muslim characters who had nothing to do with Islam or Muslim representation. As a result, three Hollywood movies with mostly Muslim characters or that were entirely filmed in a Muslim country have been chosen through purposive sampling. For this purpose, the Innocence Of Muslims (2012), The Dictator (2012) Zero Dark Thirty (2012) were selected. Each movie's single scene was used as a unit of study.

Theoretical framework

Gratification theory

The gratifications theory - people shape the meaning of media messages to meet their own needs. Mass media could shift opinions and behaviors. For example, one study showed that extensive exposure to television violence desensitized viewers to real-world violence. Mass media is not just a universal message sent out at large, but is targeted to and defined by its niche audience, their education, income, and culture.

The Hypodermic needle theory

The hypodermic needle theory - proposed that mass media's effect on its audience was immediate and powerful, like the injection of a drug.

Literature Review

One of the key issues in communication study is the argument compared to the gap between reality and its production in the media. Humans live in a world awash in pictures created by the media, that are used to define meanings about social and political issues. (Gamson, William A., David Croteau, William Hoynes., & Theodore Sasson,1992).

Since it is controlled by people with power and opinions, the lens through which we view the world is not objective. Additionally, this medium is special in that the phenomenon of social formation is fully concealed because the entire process seems so natural and every day. There is a distinction between presenting facts and representing them, according to researchers. (Baudrillard, Jean,1988) The mass media places a greater focus on the development of images than on the production of facts or information. (Sanders, Meghan,2009)

Images provide viewers a clearer picture in their imaginations, but their link to reality is unreliable. Images are copies of facts, but they can also be a mental representation of something that isn't actually there or present. According to Baudrillad the implosion between reality and representation is the outcome of the major advancements in reproduction technology. Media messages have the power to impart ideas, beliefs, and values as well as worldviews, with or without the knowledge of their creators. (Fine, Jack., William Bird,2006).

According to researchers, what the media portrays to the public may not be entirely accurate. What the media portrays is not the true image; rather, it is far from reality (Luhmann, Niklas,2000) with usually only one side or a portion of the truth presented.(Roskos-Ewoldsen., David R., Beverly Roskos-Ewoldsen., & Francesca R. Dillman Carpenti(2002).

Luhman stated that the mass media contains a set of recursive programs that are incompatible with commonly recognized principles of impartiality and truthfulness

According to Luhman, there are a number of recursive programmes in the media that conflict with widely accepted standards of objectivity and truthfulness. He went on to say that information is only chosen by the media if it meets the organization's reflexive criteria. Anything else is either downplayed or manipulated to present an incomplete image that fails to meet the requirements of objectivity and journalistic freedom. (Allport, Gordon Willard,1954)

Other elements impede the free flow of information in addition to merely presenting one side of the issue. Any given communication tends to be significantly biased by the mediated information or prejudice that regularly surfaces on screens. A slight distortion in another part of the communication, free from prejudice and stereotyping, is sufficient to grasp the entire communication, even if one section is distorted. (Blum, Lawrence,2004).

Simply put, any media content has a stereotyped aspect that is more persuasive than the rest of the message, and it has the potential to shift the message's entire meaning. Regarding bias that arises from overgeneralization of any group or community, Allport noted. He claimed that this assumption stems from a lack of thorough knowledge of the excluded group, which he attributes to a lack of socialization with its members. Others, on the other hand, may not relate this trait to a lack of expertise. (Lippman, Walter,1922).

Stereotypes are inaccurate and misleading generalizations. (Barlow, William, & Jannette Lake Dates,1990). Stereotypes are mental constructs that influence how the public feels and how people understand the world. (Courtney, Alice E., & Thomas W. Whipple,1983)

They are people's widely held opinions about a group or its members inside a culture. 35 Stereotypes, like any mental shorthand, are the simplest and shortest manner of conveying information. (Blum, Lawrence,2004)

All of these definitions imply that these broad generalizations render the excluded group or community immune to counter-evidence. Stereotypes shape the overall view of a community and subject it to incorrect attributions, depriving the group of both recognition and social respect group that has both approval and esteem from others. Blum suggested that a certain characteristic (usually negative) is associated generalizations about the stereotyped group are made by society as a result. (Wood, Julia T,1994)

There are various types of stereotyping. In traditional media, gender and race stereotypes are the most are the most commonly used. Gender stereotypes are basic beliefs about female and male characteristics as well as their skills and the generally recognized gender-based expectations for each, such as "that thing is a man's work" " and "it's a man's

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job" 'Girlish' is an example of this. Males may not be concerned, but females are the ones who are on the receiving end. The male is powerful, whilst the female is feeble. Males are commanding, but females are subservient. Men are perceived as being physically strong, emotionally dominant, and autonomous. (Basow, Susan A,1992). These misconceptions are so widespread that they can even be seen in fairy tales. (Welch, Kelly,2007).

After gender, racial stereotyping is the most important and pertinent subject. Biologically, culturally, ethnically, genetically, historically, geographically, linguistically, religiously, or social, race is a classification system that divides humans into big and diverse populations or groups. The color of one's skin has been the subject of the majority of studies on the subject of race. For far too long, African-Americans have been stereotyped. They were thought to be powerful, athletic, as well as vicious and criminal. The general opinion in the United States is that African Americans are more prone than white Americans to be violent and criminals. (Tonry, Micheal. Malign Neglect,1995).

Though it has been claimed that Blacks are more involved in criminal activities than other groups, (Chan, Connie S,1988) it has been discovered that public impression of Black criminology well exceeds reality. Apart from their links to violent actions, Blacks have long been stereotyped as uncivilized and unruly. People from other parts of the world, such as Asians and Latinos, are also represented, Europeans, on the other hand, have some peculiar characteristics. Asian guys, for example, are stereotyped as short, passive, and lacking in the characteristics of successful men, whilst Asian females are described as compassionate, submissive, and sexually exotic. (Timberlake, Jeffrey M., & Rhys H. Willia2009).

"The Little Asians" refers to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people, but not Indians. are commonly referred to as "over-achievers" due to their excellent scholastic achievements. Timberlake revealed that immigrants to the US from various nations received varying rates. The portrayal of different parts of the world in the media has remained inconsistent. According to a survey, people from the Middle East were assessed negatively by participants, compared to European and Asian peers. Even though the study respondents believed the Middle Eastern immigrants, primarily Muslims, to be financially solid, they yet perceived them as threatening. (Gorham, Bradley 2005).

Ferguson accepted the existence of racial and ethnic prejudices, as well as gender discrimination. (Spector, Alan J,1998). Gorham said that linguistic intergroup bias and crime stories abound in the news media. Stereotypes clearly had a racial component to them. (Basow, Susan A,1992). Spector's investigation into stereotyped media content was expanded to include Disney Feature Films, where he found that the comedic and racially biased depictions of a variety of ethnic groups, including Asians, Jews, Mexicans, and Africans, were common. According to him, the cartoons perpetuate racist prejudices typical of the time period in which they were created. Black crows depicted the stuffy Englishmen, and the sensual East Indian girl in The Jungle Book typified Asian ladies. (Harrison, Kristen,n.d). mainstream media. She added that during prime time on television, males receive three times more representation than girls. (Covert, Juanita J., & Travis L. Dixon,2008).

According to the Cultivation theory, media has long-term and powerful effects on viewers' psyches. The media has the ability to shape public opinion on a variety of subjects.

(Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, Nancy Signorielli, &James Shanahan,2002). The type of media content they watched influenced their perceptions of other community groups and their assessments of social realities. People have become more impacted by news or entertainment content than by actual events in society. (Roskos-Ewoldsen, David R., Beverly Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Francesca R. Dillman ,20

Media consumption has the power to alter mindsets, leading to erroneous perspectives of others and reality. (Ferguson, Robert,1998). By providing a stimulus to existing prejudices, the media also increases biases and stereotypes. A basic concept could serve as a catalyst for improving viewers' already held opinions. (Dixon, Travis L,2000). Researchers have discovered a link between the establishment of prejudices and stereotypes and the effect of conventional media in the past.

Other researchers have also highlighted how media stereotyping affects society's viewpoints and behavior. (Hobbs, Renee, Aghigh Ebrahimi, Nuala Cabral, Jiwon Yoon, & Rawia Al-Humaidan, 2010). Children's attitudes toward the world around them can be shaped significantly by the media. (Barreto, Matt A., Sylvia Manzano, & Gary Segura, 2012).

Not only children, but also adults, are influenced by how the media portrays those who are excluded. In a study on Latino perceptions in the United States, it was discovered that news and entertainment media material had a significant impact on non-Latinos' perceptions of Latinos. (Welch, Kelly,2007). Welsh examined how unfavorable stereotypes in the media in the United States contributed to a public belief that the majority of Black men were involved in criminal and violent activities. (Kalkan, Kerem Ozan, Geoffrey C. Layman, & Eric M. Uslaner,2009).

Religious, racial, and ethnic prejudice, which has long been a hallmark of the American people, has decreased dramatically in recent decades, yet major exceptions still exist. A peculiar instance has been that of Muslims, who, in contrast to the majority of religious and ethnic minorities, continue to be viewed with suspicion. Berelson, Bernard,1952).

Research Methodology

A qualitative content analysis was used as the research method for this study. Content analysis is a research method for objectively, systematically, and quantitatively describing the evident content of communications. (Berger, Arthur Asa,1998). Content analysis is a type of research that involves calculating the amount of something like violence, any negative depictions of women or other content that might be found in a representative sample of a widely mediated popular art form. (Kerlinger, Fred N,1979

One of the most used research approaches in the social sciences is content analysis. It provides a foundation for evaluating frames, words, phrases, and a variety of other elements in media-related studies. (Huntington, Samuel P,1993).

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Sample films selection and population

Sample size is three Hollywood films with mostly Muslim characters or that were entirely filmed in an Islamic country were chosen through purposive sampling. For this purpose, the films Innocence of Muslims (2012), The Dictator (2012), Zero Dark Thirty(2012)

Innocence of Muslims (2012)

A short anti-Islamic film called Innocence of Muslims was written and made by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula. The 14-minute film was released to YouTube in two different versions in July 2012. Arabic-dubbed versions of the video were uploaded in early September 2012. In post-production, dubbing had been used to insert anti-Islamic material. Numerous protests were held around the world of Muslims in response to the anti-Islamic short film Innocence of Muslims' release.

The Dictator (2012)

It is a comedy movie. Larry Charles is the director of this political satire and comedy film that Sacha Baron Cohen wrote mocking the Islamic caliphate and that Democracy is the only system that can govern the planet and advance humanity, as has been demonstrated to the Dictator.

Tyrant attempts to portray Muslims as being uneducated or illiterate by depicting a dictator ruling over an Islamic kingdom called Wadia. Their pastime is murder. Jihad has been mocked, and Islam is portrayed as a religion of terrorism in addition to not granting women's rights. In this film, beards are mocked and cut, then burned in the fire. Additionally, everyone with a beard is a terrorist. this type of filmmaker deceives people by exploiting the film industry.

Zero Dark Thirty (2012)

American thriller movie written by Mark Boal and directed by Kathryn Bigelow. disgusting stereotypes and misrepresentations. The film has damaged Pakistan's image in addition to misrepresenting Islam and its adherents. Movie has harmed Pakistan's reputation as well.

Finding and Conclusion

According to the findings, Hollywood is continuing its practice of portraying Islam and Muslims in most of its films in an unfavorable light. In the films chosen, it was clear that for Hollywood, Muslims are all the same, with no distinction between good and evil. All aspects of Muslims were portrayed in a negative light. In the films of the year 2012, to 2017 rulers, the general population, government officials, and law enforcement organizations were all depicted in an unfavorable light.

Aside from the sectors, when it came to the representation of Islamic countries in Hollywood films, the tendency was found to be similar. Almost other Islamic countries, ranging from Pakistan in South Asia to Libya in Africa, had nearly comparable representations, with Turkey being the only one with a positive representation. Although

there was some improvement in the infrastructure of Islamic countries, there was no other change in the portrayal of Islamic people. In the same way, life in Islamic countries was depicted as visibly difficult. The messages that Hollywood sends out are strong and global; as a result, they must be reexamined and made more realistic.

Since the very beginning of feature films, Hollywood has had a lengthy history of stereotyping Islam and Muslims. The researchers have found that it still exists today, though. These innovative tactics are regularly used by the West to advance the notion of a clash of civilizations. (Roy', Eleanor Ainge, & Lisa Martin,2020).

The unfavorable and stereotyped representation of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood films can cause dread and threat in the minds of audiences all around the world. It's possible that viewers will develop a dislike for Islam and its adherents. This could explain why Islamophobic and anti-Muslim incidents, such as mosque burnings and attacks on worshipers, have increased in most parts of the world, including the United States, Canada, Europe, and New Zealand. (Sial, Nauman, Abid Zafar, & Yasar Arafat,2019). Furthermore, the anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim movements in Germany are on the rise. PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Siamization of the West) is a striking demonstration of utter hatred for Islam and its adherents. The Hollywood films of 2012 to 2017 also show a clear expression of a stereotyped trend that has to be addressed since it could have far-reaching ramifications for Islam and its adherents.

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