

Coverage of Socioeconomic and Political Issues Related to Muslims in Kannada and Urdu Dailies

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Abstract

This study investigates the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims in Karnataka. For the study, Kannada newspaper *Prajavani* and Urdu newspaper *Sahara* for the period of two months, i.e., January and February 2017 were selected. A total of 60 newspapers in total were chosen to analyze the prioritized coverage of issues in newspapers to examine how the socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims were covered in daily Kannada and Urdu newspapers. This study also compared the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims in Kannada and Urdu newspapers. The methodology adopted was quantitative content analysis. Major categories such as news stories, articles, advertisements, editorials, etc., were evaluated.

Keywords: Social, Economic, Political, Muslims, Kannada newspaper, Urdu newspaper

Introduction

The Muslims, followers of Islam form, the second largest religious community in India accounting for 14.23 percent of the total population. As compared to the other religions, Muslims have a higher perception of unfairness and this sense of discrimination is especially high in the employment and educational arenas. Participation of Muslims is relatively low in the education space but has improved in recent years. However, the situation is particularly poor in urban areas, especially for Muslim males.⁷

Muslim representation in the Indian media is dismal, while Muslims' share in media ownership is even more pathetic. Muslims do not have any considerable hold over the media. In northern India, several Urdu newspapers owned by Muslims have gradually closed down or have rapidly lost circulation. In contrast, Urdu dailies from centers like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Kolkata and even

Bangalore are doing well and look professional.¹

Portrayal of Muslims in media has changed significantly in the past decades. It is necessary to see how media representations have shaped public opinion of Islam. The mainstream Indian media misrepresents and under represents the Muslims and does not always accurately reflect the reality of the millions of Muslims in India. A combination of factors influence the way that Islam is portrayed in Indian mass media, which include: political party affiliation to news sources, funding issues, western media infiltration and lack of a coherent self-view among Indian Muslims.²

Print media plays an important role in molding public opinion. For this study, two newspapers were selected on the basis of their circulation to compare the coverage and representation of Muslims. *Prajavani* is one of the leading newspapers in Kannada and *Sahara* newspaper is an Urdu

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leading newspaper in Karnataka.

Literature Review

Sultana and Kakade¹³ in their study the sociopolitical issues related to Muslims in English and Urdu Newspaper. For this study, the researcher has analyzed *The Hindu* (English) and *Daily Salar* (Urdu) newspapers because these newspapers have good circulation. This study found that English newspaper is not giving proper coverage to Muslim-related issues but Urdu newspaper is giving a positive and a proper coverage to Muslim-related issues. The study also shows that the coverage of sociopolitical issues related to Muslims in Urdu newspaper is more than the coverage in the English newspaper.

Sultana and Kakade¹³ reported that newspapers have frequently featured Muslims in terrorist events, stories highlighting a politicized, Islamist, etc., as such stories have focused attention upon debates about religious and cultural values. Content analyses method is adopted for this study. For analysis, Kannada newspaper *Vijaya Karnataka* and Urdu newspaper *Daily Salar* for the period of two months were selected, i.e., July and August 2016. A total of 60 issues were selected for this study. The study found that Kannada newspaper is giving less coverage to Muslim issues than the Urdu newspaper.

Katy et al.¹² found the hegemony of Islamophobia in the majority of the newspapers examined. *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Independent* all constructed Muslims in a largely negative light; this was illustrated more so by the tabloid press. This can be seen reflecting in the wider social, public, and political discourses surrounding Muslims as fundamentally problematic and as representing the enemy of the West.

Elizabeth⁵ reported that Muslims have been represented as an immigrant group that are not only a drain on resources but have brought alien values and practices into the UK, threatening "our values". Issues that have arisen out of a complex changing political and social context are blamed on "cultural difference" and increasingly since 9/11, and the subsequent "war on terror", are linked to a security threat. 9/11, therefore, is one of those contexts that have shaped the way Muslims have been constructed in public discourse. 9/11 created a climate in which the outcomes of neoliberal restructuring of the economy could easily be displaced onto the problems of "Muslim integration".

Ghulam et al.¹¹ depict that the proportion of negative coverage (57.08%) is greater than the positive coverage (6.08%). *Newsweek* and *Time* mainly represented Afghanistan as an abode of Taliban and extremism, penitentiary for women, a narcotics den, a center for Islamization, and a safe haven for Al-Qaida and Usama Bin Laden, to include a few.

Shaari et al.³ indicate that the newspapers gave extensive coverage to news events deemed important to their respective communities and this study supports the literature that says that vernacular newspapers in Malaysia are mainly influenced by the interests of their own communities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyze the prioritized coverage of issues in newspapers
- To examine how the socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims are represented in daily newspapers
- To find out how Muslims are portrayed in newspapers
- To compare the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims in Kannada and Urdu newspapers
- To quantify the coverage and treatment given to Muslim-related issues in newspapers

Methodology

The study was conducted to find out the coverage of Muslim issues in newspapers. Content analysis method is adopted for this study. Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of media. In the present study, directions of the content were measured separately with regard to the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims to determine the directions of the contents of the media. News stories, articles, advertisements, editorials, etc., were evaluated in the present study. For this study, Kannada newspaper *Prajavani* and Urdu newspaper *Sahara* for the period of two months, i.e., January and February 2017 were selected. A total of 60 newspapers were selected for this study. Newspapers were selected based on their circulation. The researcher used simple random sampling method for the internal selection of newspapers.

Data Analysis

Table 1. Major News Items Published in Prajavani and Sahara Newspapers

Types of News	Prajavani				Sahara			
	Space	%	Quantity	%	Space	%	Quantity	%
News	344472.96	61.9	2103	43.8	327151.71	48.4	2289	53.7%
Entertainment	6908.55	1.24	60	1.2	5240.31	0.7	51	1.1%
Sports	81157.2	14.5	522	10.8	47009.85	6.9	336	7.8%
Business	26452.86	4.7	231	4.8	6871.44	1	45	1%
Editorials	7097.7	1.27	36	0.75	8495.55	1.2	33	0.7%
Articles	39808.83	7.1	78	1.6	5475.15	0.8	129	3%
Terrorism	6430.77	1.1	66	1.3	18374.04	2.7	129	3%
Advertisements	87950.49	15.8	1539	32	57189.75	8.4	600	14%
Muslim-related issues	17216.49	3	165	3.4	199729.36	29.5	650	15.2%
Total	555930.507	100	4800	100	675537.16	100	4262	100%

First part of Table 1 reports the coverage of major issues in *Prajavani* newspaper. The study shows that among all the categories, majority of the space 344472.96 sq cm (61.9%) is given to news with 2103 (43.8%) items, 87950.49 sq cm (15.8%) space is given to advertisements with 1539 (32%) items, while 81157.2 sq cm (14.5%) is given to sports with 522 (10.8%) items, whereas articles with 39808.83 sq cm (7.1%) of 78 (1.6%) items, business news covers 26452.86 sq cm (4.7%) with 231 (4.8%) items. While 17216.49 sq cm (3%) space with item 165 (3.4%) is given to Muslim-related issues, editorials cover the space of 7097.7 sq cm (1.27%) with items 36 (0.75%), 6908.55 sq cm (1.24%) with 60 (1.2%) items is given to entertainment and 6430.77 sq cm (1.1) space with 66 (1.3%) items is given to terrorism-related issues.

Second part of Table 1 indicates the major categories covered by Urdu newspaper *Sahara*. The study reveals that majority of the space 327151.71 sq cm (48.4%) is given to news with 2289 (53.7%) items, 199729.36 cm (29.5%) is given to Muslim-related issues with 650 (15.2%) items, while advertisements cover 57189.75 sq cm (8.4%) with 600 (14%) items, sports is with 47009.85 sq cm (6.9%) with 336 (7.8%) items, terrorism with 18374.04 sq cm (2.7%) with 129 (3%) items. Whereas editorials cover the space of 8495.55 sq cm (1.2%) with 33 (0.7%) items, 6871.44 sq cm (1%) with item 45 (1%) is given to business articles with space 5475.15 sq cm (0.8%) with 129 (3%) items and 5240.31sq cm (0.7%) with 51 (1.1%) is given to entertainment-related issues.

From the observations made from Table 1, it is clear that majority of the Muslim issues were published in the Urdu newspaper than in the Kannada newspaper.

Table 2. Socioeconomic and Political Issues Related to Muslims in the Front Page

Categories	Prajavani				Sahara			
	Space	%	Quantity	%	Space	%	Quantity	%
Social	352.8	2	9	5.4	4744.8	2.3	30	4.6
Political	-	-	-	-	2915.13	1.4	15	2.3
Economic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2 examines the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims published in the front page of the newspapers under study. It shows that *Prajavani* covers 352.8 sq cm (2%) with 9 (5.4%) items related to social issues and it is interesting to see that there is not a single economic or political news published in the front page of *Prajavani* newspaper related to Muslims. In *Sahara*, 4744.8 sq cm (2.3%) with 30 (4.6%) space is given to social issues, whereas 2915.13 sq cm (1.4%) with 15 (2.3%) is given to political issues and here also, the front page carries no news related to Muslims on economic issues.

Table 3. Social Issues Related to Muslims in Different Newspapers

Social Issues	Prajavani				Sahara			
	Space	%	Quantity	%	Space	%	Quantity	%
Cultural	1296	10.5	12	9.5	23370.9	13.5	132	25.7
Education	969.24	7.9	6	4.7	21093.54	12.2	102	19.8
Health	-	-	-	-	132	0.07	3	0.5
Development	-	-	-	-	3840.72	2.2	30	5.8
Judiciary	1056	8.6	9	7.1	1854.36	1.07	15	2.9
Crime and Accident	568.65	4.6	12	9.5	5762.52	3.3	66	12.8
Terrorism	1437.6	11.7	24	19	5127.6	2.9	24	4.6
Editorials	288	2.3	3	2.3	2353.5	1.3	9	1.7
Articles	882	7.1	3	2.3	26263.8	15.2	12	2.3
Sports	2953.14	24	27	21.4	5454.05	3.1	36	7
Others	2812.71	22	30	23.8	56359.17	32.6	84	16.3
Total	12263.34	100	126	100	172782.16	100	513	100

The data reported in Table 3 shows that in *Prajavani* newspaper majority of the space 2953.14 sq cm (24%) with 27 (21.4%) items is given to sports news related to Muslims, 2812.71 sq cm (22%) with 30 (23.8%) items is other issues which include foreign news, protest, government and literature, terrorism covers 1437.6 sq cm (11.7%) space with 24 (19%) items, 1296 sq cm (10.5%) space with 12 (9.5%) items is given to cultural news. While 1056 sq cm (8.6%) with 6 (4.7%) items is given to judiciary, education covers 969.24 sq cm (7.9%) with 6 (4.7%) items, articles cover 882 sq cm with 3 (2.3%) items related to social issues, 568.65 sq cm (4.6%) with 12 (9.5%) space is given to crime and accident, only 288 sq cm (2.3%) with 3 (2.3%) items is covered by editorials related to Muslims and the interesting finding is that in *Prajavani* newspaper not a single news is published regarding health and social development related to Muslims.

Table 3 reveals that Urdu newspaper *Sahara* gives majority of the space to issues which include literature, protest, government achievements and foreign affairs with 56359.17 sq cm (24.9%) and 84 (16.3%) items, followed by articles 26263.8 sq cm (15.2%) space with 12 (2.3%) items, 23370.9 sq cm (13.5%) with 132 (25.7%) items space is given to culture, while 21093.54 cm (12.2%) space with 102 (19.8%) items is given to education, 5762.52 sq cm (3.3%) space with 66 (12.8%) items is given to crime and accident news, sports news cover 5454.05 sq cm (3.1%) space with 36 (7%) items, 5127.6 sq cm (2.9%) space with 24 (4.6%) items covers terrorism, 3840.72 sq cm (2.2%) with 30 (5.8%) items space is given to social development issues, 2353.5 sq cm (1.3%) space with 9 (1.7%) items cover editorials, 1854.36 sq cm with 15 (2.9%) items cover judiciary news and only 132 sq cm (0.07%) space with 3 (0.5%) items cover health news related to Muslims.

Table 4. Political Issues Related to Muslims in Different Newspapers

Political Issues	Prajavani				Sahara			
	Space	%	Quantity	%	Space	%	Quantity	%
News	2052.15	52.8	18	85.7	19608.45	88.7	108	92.3
Editorials	1833	47.1	3	14.2	818.85	3.7	3	2.5
Articles	-	-	-	-	1657.5	7.5	6	5.1
Total	3885.15	100	21	100	22084.8	100	117	100

Table 4 depicts the coverage of political issues in different newspapers. *Prajavani* gives majority of the space 2052.15 sq cm (52.8%) with 18 (85.7%) to political news, followed by 1833 sq cm (47.1%) space with 3 (14.2%) items is given to political editorials related to Muslims and not a single article is published in Kannada newspaper on politics related to Muslims.

Whereas in *Sahara*, majority of the space, 19608.45 sq cm (88.7%) with 108 (92.3%) is given to news, 1657.5 sq cm (7.5%) space with 6 (5.1%) item is give to political articles and 818.85 sq cm (3.7%) space with 3 (2.5%) items is given to political editorials related to Muslims.

Table 5. Economic Issues Related to Muslims in Different Newspapers

Economic Issues	Prajavani				Sahara			
	Space	%	Quantity	%	Space	%	Quantity	%
News	684	64.1	6	66.6	2806.8	57.7	15	71.4%
Editorials	-	-	-	-	745.2	15.3	3	14.2%
Articles	384	35.9	3	33.4	1310.4	26.9	3	14.2%
Total	1068	100	9	100	4862.4	100	21	100%

Table 5 observes the economic issues published by Kannada and Urdu newspapers. It is found that *Prajavani* has given majority of the space 684 sq cm (64.1%) with 6 (66.6%) items to economic news related to Muslims, while 384 sq cm (35.9%) with 3 (33.4%) items is given to articles on economics and not a single editorial related to Muslims is published in Kannada newspaper.

Urdu newspaper has given 2806.8 sq cm (57.7%) with 15 (71.4%) items to economic news, 1310.4 sq cm (26.9%) with 3 (14.2%) items to articles on economics and only 745.2 sq cm (15.3%) with 3 (14.2%) items is given to articles on economics related to Muslims.

Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to find out the coverage of Muslim issues in newspapers. For this study, the researcher has analyzed *Prajavani*, one of the leading Kannada daily and *Sahara*, an Urdu newspaper with good circulation. The newspapers inform the masses about what is happening in their community, country and the world at large. Kannada is the regional language of Karnataka and therefore Kannada newspapers have a large number of readers in Karnataka. Most Muslim representations in the Indian media are limited to Urdu newspapers. Urdu is considered to be the language of Muslims, so the readership is also limited to them.

The findings show that majority of the space to Muslim issues is given in Urdu newspapers than in Kannada. *Sahara* newspaper has given positive coverage to Muslim issues. In *Prajavani* economic and political issues related to Muslims are ignored on the front page of the newspaper. The study also reveals that the coverage of socioeconomic and political issues related to Muslims is more in Urdu than in Kannada newspaper.

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