

# Media Representation of Muslims and Islam From 2011-2019: A Meta Analysis

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Media is a powerful tool to portray, represent and influence perceptions towards a particular ideology and religion in the present age of technology. Present study presents the findings about the role of media regarding Muslims and Islamic beliefs and identity. For the purpose a meta-analysis of 353 published studies from were critically reviewed and examined. The detailed quantitative analysis focuses on the geographical distribution, techniques, hypothesis, forms of media and time duration of published data whereas, qualitative analysis examined the most prestigious and well-known studied subject matters. Results from this study give the impression that most of the studies extends to European or western countries and on the other hand Islamic states and media belonged to them have been avoided. Findings also shed light on low volume of comparative studies, lack of perceptibility and scarcity of internet based quality work. A large number of researches focused on the trends of war on terror, links of Muslims in terror related incidences, Islamic extremism and migration. Furthermore, analysis and data of this study reveals the fact of negatively portraying the image and identity of Muslims. The religion of Islam as whole represented as religion associated with extremism, terror, violence and intolerance. Suggestions based on analysis are also taken into account.

*Keywords:* Media representation, Islam, Muslims, Meta-analysis, Qualitative and Quantities analysis

## Introduction

Media has a great influence on people and their thought process in today's world. Thus, this area has gained extensive attention in literature and research in the past few decades. Media representation of minorities around the globe has diversely affected how the public deals with them when encountered in the public or social level. Media highlighting different aspects of any group of people derives the public view about them and reiterates the relationship between the issues about ethnic existence, race, and political identity. Yet different eras remained dominated by discussion of different classes in terms of religion and belongingness, today, the world is more inclined to get a broader view about Muslims and Islam. Thus, every debate revolves around Muslims, their beliefs, and their thought process. Different occurrences around the globe have also positioned this process into a more narrowed direction. Events like 9/11 have brought Muslims to the limelight where they are criticized and discussed. This incident has truly partitioned the West from the Eastern Muslim countries. Discussions and studies have been done to highlight what are the influences which derive Muslims towards such activities. Very clear demarcation has been made between the West and the Muslim countries in the world to demonstrate that West is separate from the Muslim world.

Different cultures and countries portray a variable image of Islam and Muslims with some showing democratic view while others having less leniency in terms of their expression. In this, the United States has shown strict and exposed negativity against Muslims since the incident of 9/11 (Powell, 2011). These inclinations and expressions against Muslims saw many ups and downs in different eras for example in Bush period, when the clash became more exposed and active (Kumar, 2010). In the recent decade, media has evolved a lot in terms of methods, procedures, and infrastructure. The media reach has expanded tremendously due to satellite communication. Media has finely influenced the mindsets of people around the globe. The news and talk shows on media are aggressive and they directly address specific issues and religions. Media has targeted Islam and Muslims by relating them to terrorist activities and events around the world. This has made Muslims and Islam questionable and their presence in Western countries have raised routine life concerns for them due to the public opinion and view about them built through the social and television media. Media demonstration about Muslims has not only affected them in routine social setups but this has also enforced government level policies to get affected. This area demands a detailed study of whether such an inclination of media against Muslims and Islam is justified and how is this influencing their existence in the Western world.

Researchers have tried to evaluate this area of media representation of Muslims around the globe using different scientific methods yet a detailed analysis is still awaited. Studies have been done extensively in the last decade covering a longer period of times and providing in-depth analysis. These studies have highlighted different regions of the world and the existence of Muslims in those regions (Ibrahim, 2010; Kumar, 2010; Ehrkamm, 2010; Ahmed, 2010; Kabir, 2010; Patil, 2015; Ahmed, 2012; Ewart, 2012; Green, 2013). All these studies have addressed specific issues and regions which provide limited results. Such results are surely present yet they are not related to other studies in a systematic way for a detailed period to conclude them in the form of a sound finding. Thus, a recent study in this area is required which rigorously studies the previous research studies and provides an outcome considering scientific reasoning and evidence. This study is executed to present a detailed meta-analysis of studies done between the period from 2011 till 2019 to evaluate the media representation of Muslims and Islam around the globe. The proposed study is valuable as none of such study has been done in the last few years to consolidate the findings of the studies done over the last decade. Technology and media have advanced many folds in the last 10 years and thus its representation and influence have also evolved drastically. Numerous studies have been done considering variable aspects around the globe featuring the media existence and discussion about Muslims and Islam. This study aims to highlight the different qualitative aspects in this area where representation and demonstration of Muslims on Media is affecting their image and public view. This work will contribute to providing a consolidated view of all the previous studies and highlight their major findings of Muslims, Islam, and their image. Additionally, media representation is very important in this area of research. Media has a very dominant role in the representation of Muslims and their identity around the globe. The most important and different aspect of this study is to evaluate how far are these studies moderate and balanced in considering what Muslims themselves have to say about the findings from different studies. This study addresses the fine need to consider the perspective and view of Muslims towards how they or their religion is being discussed on media. Muslims constitute a large portion of the world's population and to gain positive political and cultural interests, it stands essential to consider their voice appropriately (Courbage & Todd, 2014). This study will utilize content analysis of the studies done over a period of the last 10 years to provide a detailed qualitative analysis of the topic. The main target of this qualitative analysis is to highlight the main influences which define and derive the Muslim image and

representation around the globe. This study will highlight which factors are more important in deriving this representation against Muslims and how this can be rectified in future to generate equal opportunities and existence rights for Muslims and Islam in future.

In the next section, a detailed literature review has been provided in this area where major interest has been laid down in understanding how media is influencing the Muslim world with its biased demonstration. In Section 3, the methodology is presented and a detailed review has been provided of how this study is executed to get valuable results in terms of qualitative analysis. Section 4 highlights the findings extracted from this study with a detailed discussion presented in Section 5. Some future directions and limitations have been discussed in Section 6 which also concludes the study.

### **Literature Review**

Technology and its trends have evolved at a tremendous pace over the last century and this has affected all fields of life. Media has evolved over the last two decades at an extremely fast rate. It has developed not only in terms of technology and infrastructure but also in terms of how information is portrayed with specific inclinations and interests. Different forms of media are used to disseminate the information to viewers including text, visual, and audio. The media industry has developed as a completely independent platform which has generated its space in human lives. This space has a great influence on their lives. People have been seamlessly trained to think and see what is on the screens and they pay less attention and invest less in terms of time and efforts in digging out the real story behind the scenes. Thus, anything displayed or spread through media sources is heard with very interest and is considered correct and real by most of the public. Different areas of human life have been under discussion on the social forums and talk shows including race, ethnicity, religion, and culture. Muslims and Islam were brought to the front after the incident of 9/11 in the US. The chances of having Muslims involved in this event made Islam and its followers extremely controversial. Muslims very negatively treated, addressed, and discussed around the globe. Media is the only and most accepted source of gaining world information biased by negatively portraying the image of Islam and Muslims. Media played its full role in supporting the anti-Muslim controversies and damaging the real picture of Islam. This increased the difficulty for Muslims in managing their freedom around the world and especially for Muslims settled in the Western part of the world. This triggered researchers to study how this media representation of Muslims and Islam has affected their life and existence.

Media has been used as a source of dissemination of information to a wide range of viewers. They have diverse backgrounds in terms of culture, values, and religions. Literature is full of studies which address how media discusses and portrays Muslims and Islam. A huge set of studies have clearly shown that the media has helped a lot in destroying the true image of Muslims and Islam. Media has focused more on the negative side and demonstrated that Muslims are the actual source of unrest and destructive activities and incidences around the world. The Western media has won all the races in openly victimizing Muslims and Islam. The study by Baker et al. (2013) showed that both normal and an extremist approach of representing and discussing Muslims have portrayed their negative image. Muslims are commonly addressed to be Islamic which itself shows a democratic view of media conveying a very extremist and religiously conflicting stance. Muslims and Islam are commonly associated with terrorism and extremism which itself is unjustified and drags the public categorization to different and diverse extremes. Use of such controversial words with Muslims generates seamless conflict for them in society and public level. Additionally, Muslims values and beliefs are questioned

openly on media and other social platforms. Muslim men and women are triggered for their beliefs and perspectives about internal as well as external personalities, i.e., actions and dressing. Muslim women have been posed to being victims while Muslim men are marked to initiate violent events and promoting terror. Some interesting studies have been done in the first decade of the 21st century to study what has been the main focus of studies done related to Islam and Muslims. Moore et al. (2008) have demonstrated through a rigorous study that over the period of nine years (2000-2008), the number of research articles which address Muslims and their behaviours have increased with a drastically increasing trend. Many important studies are being done to discriminate Islam and Muslims with respect to other cultures and religions. In this regard, a difference in the West and Muslim world has been clearly discussed in recent articles. On the other end, less is being discussed about what Muslims face due to this increased propaganda about Islam and Muslims. A very limited number of stories and articles have been found discussing how Muslims are being attacked and tortured. In reality, less focus is being laid on the issues and problems of Muslims if the same period is being considered. A study by Poole (2002) has shown that Muslims are demarcated as irrational people with no moral values. They are classified to harm democracy and are called to have reserved in fact conservative values which are harmful to today's liberal globalization world. Similar trends followed in a study done by Manan (2008) which shows that social media is overall dragged against Islam by portraying the wrong image and values of Islam. Media including television, radio, and newspapers shows an extremist and evil picture of Islam and Muslims which becomes threatening for their existence and survival, especially in the Western world. Islam has been associated with harm not only the military aspects and accelerate terrorist activities but also has been demonstrated to harm democracy and social values. Such inclinations against Islam and Muslims are generally regarded to have occurred after the incident of 9/11 yet similar trends have been noticed in studies done before this (Richardson, 2004; Hafez, 2000).

Most of the work which is presented in the form of literature concerning religion and cultures mostly discusses either non-Islamic issues while those which actually address Islam and Muslims focus more on its negative image. In contrast to the television and printed media, the public social media included the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter has contributed less in promoting anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic content. This was the case a decade ago but now such online media portals have also started contributing to such topics. Facebook has promoted the concepts of online Islamophobia (Awan, 2016; Oboler, 2016). This clearly categorized Muslims as a security threat to society and the world. The general attitudes of Muslims have been regarded as abusive and dishonest which brings them to a category where their presence becomes dangerous (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016).

Ideologies are created and promoted using mass media. Mindsets and thought processes are streamlined using defined trends in the social media dissemination of information. Media has developed and it has reached to everyone and thus the information distributed using different modes of media is monitored and trained to indulge specific values and concepts into the viewers. Anything showed on media depicts the culture of that specific country or region and through this dissemination of information, people are taught the values. Studies have shown that mass media is responsible to derive the ideologies and mental development which can sometimes be misleading and misguiding. Such a trained development of brains can be based on a stereotypical representation of information. In the context of this study, such dominance can result in misrepresentation and misuse of the media portal to misguide the image of minorities. Studies have been done to see the media inclinations and it has been found that media has been showing content which demarcates minorities.

Developed countries like UK and US have their media presenting such content which down looks the minorities by categorizing them less civilized and culturally undeveloped in comparison to the physical characteristics and ethnic and religious values of the majorities. Media portrayed minorities as victims by associating them to social concerns like rape and drugs. Media in America differentiated white from black portraying black as dishonest, violent, drug addicts, and aggressors (Staples, 2011). Other parts of the world have such misrepresentation against the minorities in those regions through media portrayals. Some interesting and detailed studies have been done in past to study how has media demonstrated the impact and presence of minorities in different regions of the world (Van Dijk, 1991). It has been evident through research and studies that media clearly marks white as supreme and disregards black as a social and political threat. Later are easily victimized for violence, cultural conflict and crime. Saha (2012) has also shown that the media has shown the misrepresentation of minorities in the last few decades. The studies till the end of the 20th century targeted race and ethnicity as the main differential concern between the majorities and minorities. But there onwards, religion became a very important and critical aspect in a human's life. Thus, the trend of differentiating between people based on race and ethnicity shifted towards religion as the main interest behind academic studies and research. In this regime, Islam has been targeted at the forefront (Knott & Poole, 2013).

Not long before, but in the last quarter of the 20th century, the world realized that Islam is to be negated and this was triggered by the Iranian Revolution in 1979. This continued with more recent incidences like Libya crisis (Said, 2008). The events of 9/11 fired this situation and magnified the discourse against Islam and Muslims (Ahmed, 2012). People started building their concepts for Muslims and Islam around the world. Thus, since the last four to five decades, the anti-Islamic trends have been noticed yet this stayed as an offline issue. But this was brought to the frontline at the end of the 20th century when Islamophobia was categorized to be harmful to the rest of the world (Knott & Poole, 2013). Different studies have been done to relate Muslims, Islam, and how the West takes them. In this regard, the media has a critical role to play. Researchers have investigated to see how media is affecting the image of Islam and Muslims around the world. In last few decades, since the progress and expansion of media and communication, media has deliberately invested and executed to harm the ideologies of Islam and its followers yet they have failed on very realistic grounds and reasons in proving Muslims as extremist, dishonest, evil, and terrorists. It has been widely accepted that the West and Islam are based on two different contradictory values and concepts yet studies have shown that what Western media discusses about Islam and Muslims is exceptional. Western media does not address other minorities and religion in the same area. Said (1980) has shown that Islam has been negatively demonstrated as a threatening religion promoting violence where men suppress their women. Western media has purposefully invested more time and efforts in damaging the Muslim image. Islam has been clearly and evidently categorized as extremist religion while its followers are portrayed as uncivilized, extremists, terrorists, and brutal humans who are harmful for society (Shaheen, 2009; Mishra, 2007; Ibrahim, 2010; Powell, 2011; Bove et al., 2013).

Extensive literature is present which addresses these issues where media is portraying a biased view of Islam and Muslims yet a recent compilation of these findings is required. Many researchers have addressed the effects of Islamic activities and how they are threatening for the rest of the world yet the otherwise narrative has not been considered in many of them. The recent trends in this media representation of Muslims and Islam in the last decade demand evaluation. This study addresses a detailed review of the literature from 2011 to 2019. This meta-analysis will contribute to future evaluations and add to the existing body of literature. An overview

and discussion about how media derives the ideologies of the public has been provided. Additionally, this will unfold the main factors which can be considered in future to refine this media misrepresentation of Islam and generate equity in nations, cultures, and religious followers.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Question**

The research presented addresses the media portrayal of Muslims and Islam around the world over a period of 2000 till 2019. The main content and issues pertaining to the main topic are related to Muslims and a neutralized evaluation has been investigated and presented. Although this area affects multiple domains of life yet the main purpose of this study is to remain confined to how media ignores the real story and presents the trained image of Islam and Muslim. Additionally, the impact of this on the well-being of Muslims will be highlighted.

This study will address the following three main purposes:

1. The overall media representation of Islam and Muslims.
2. The effects of this representation on the public and social levels.
3. Consideration of how this can be avoided and handled in future to restrain from any such bias.

### **Research Methodology**

Meta-analysis can be understood as a form of survey research in which research reports, rather than people, are surveyed. Meta-analysis is a methodical way which merges various outcomes or surveys into distinct explanatory and broad analysis of comparative studies. In this research, the researcher will do meta-analysis on preceding social review on the impacts of social media portals on Muslim beliefs. The researcher will duplicate the model utilized by Ahmed and Matthes (2018) in their paper “Media Representation of Muslims and Islam From 2000 to 2015: A Meta-analysis”. Meta-analysis can be done in two phases, i.e., quantitative and qualitative. In the following paragraphs, the researcher will talk about the procedure through which the information and methodologies have been dealt with and accumulated.

Studies of the media representation of Islam and Muslims have been addressed by many scholarly works but this research addresses this issue for the recent past decade to evaluate what are the findings. Meta-analysis is the study of a rigorous amount of literature to provide an in-depth analysis of data and help identify relationships and patterns. The meta-analysis will help in identification of misrepresentations in the literary documents. The data presented as research in the literature can be efficiently optimized for systematic evaluation and to gain valuable outcomes. Yet this process like others has limitations which include restriction of evaluating this topic in a wide range of perspectives (Li & Tang, 2012). This study will address the qualitative and analytical analysis of the literature presented in the field.

The basic methodology adopted for the selection of the documents from a vast set of literature was to shortlist the research articles based on the content they address. The main keywords used in this selection included “media”, “media representation”, “Muslims”, “Islam”, “Islamic”, “Islamophobia”, and consideration of different countries where Islam is practiced as main religion like Pakistan, Malaysia, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. The main databases used to search the data comprised of Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Wiley Online Library. Books were hardly considered and most of the data extracted from them were to understand the subject topic at a broader level. The keywords and the abstract of each article were investigated for the desired information.

These were analyzed if they addressed the media representation of Islam and Muslims. The literature which addressed other aspects of media representation of Muslims based on race or ethnicity was excluded from the study as it diverted the attention to broader perspectives. While, this study has been done on narrowed down consideration of how and what media presents for Islam and Muslims. The evaluation of literature is done grounded on a single language of English and the period for which the study is done is limited from 2000 till 2019.

### **Pilot Study**

The researcher looked for the blend of the subsequent keywords: “Muslim minorities”, “ethnic relations”, “social media”, “social networking”, “under graduating students”, “Twitter”, “Facebook”, “Islamic Terrorism”, “Islamic extremism”. The reliable databases, such as Academic Index, CIA World Factbook, JSTOR, Google Correlate, and Google Scholar have been used. At first, almost 353 publications have been researched except book reviews. The main focus was on practical observations and results; by seeing abstracts of each article, the researcher skipped complete theories of articles and kept studies that investigate the different dynamic of each article. It was rechecked whether it explored or talked about aspects of media portals on Muslims beliefs. Muslims are classified as their dependent variable by us and their independent variable as a combination of social factors. Here, think about examining points as our last criteria for incorporation in the example brought about a sum of 215 articles. From a total of 215 research manuscripts, a sample of 100 was selected at random for the current study. The methodology adopted in this study comprised of qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis is done to identify different themes and trends in the studies conducted on the media representation of Muslims and Islam.

### **Findings**

Table 1 explains the main impacts of social media on Muslim beliefs or how media portrays Islam in the whole world. The numerous keywords used in abstracts of the research. As can be noticed, the term “media and Islam” occurs to be the most numerous used in articles. The majority of articles, published on Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism, appear to be concerned about terrorism, a distinctive social phenomenon which is not necessarily related to Islamic radicalism. In other words, one can imagine radical ideologies which do not encourage radical or extremist actions. However, in case of Islamic radicalism, there is a perception that all radicals are terrorists and the term “fundamentalism”, without considering its specific reference to American Protestantism, appears to be assigned to militant religious movements in general (Berger, 2001). Table 1 can show that a significant number of Europeans countries who published newspapers are more concerned about consequences, rather than the phenomenon itself. Scientists and arrangement bunches characterize Islam-o-phobic in varying point of interest, yet the term’s quintessence is the equivalent, regardless of the source. An overstated dread, disdain, and threatening vibe toward Islam and Muslims is propagated by negative generalizations bringing about inclination, separation, and the underestimation and rejection of Muslims from social, political, and city life.

Islamophobia existed however it expanded in recurrence and reputation during the previous decade. For example, Stop Islamisation of Norway (SIAN) is a Norway based anti-Muslim and an Islamophobic group that demonstrated a rally against Islam and the increasing number of Muslims in the country by burning the Muslim holy book “Quran” and throwing it in the trash which ended up being violent, quite rightly when a Muslim man after his sentiments getting hurt attacked to stop the SIAN member from burning the Quran.

Islamophobia influences in excess of a little periphery gathering of Muslims. Through different research vehicles and worldwide surveying endeavours, Gallup has gathered an abundance of information specifying general feeling about different parts of regard, treatment, and resilience comparative with Muslims around the world. This short fills in as a depiction of sentiment and thought showed by individuals from different nations, locales, and networks—discoveries that account recognitions related to Islamophobia all around.

The cross-tabulation analysis has been used from a multiple research papers. From that, the researcher analyzed different results of Islamic phobia and media attitude towards Muslim beliefs and Islam. The summaries of data results in the form of graphs have been inferred through this analysis.

**Perception of Western Countries Towards Islam**

Numerous Muslims feel that their faith and culture are not accepted in the Western societies. In particular, 57% of Denmark and 64% of Norway have a higher ratio of Muslims not being accepted in the social norms of society.

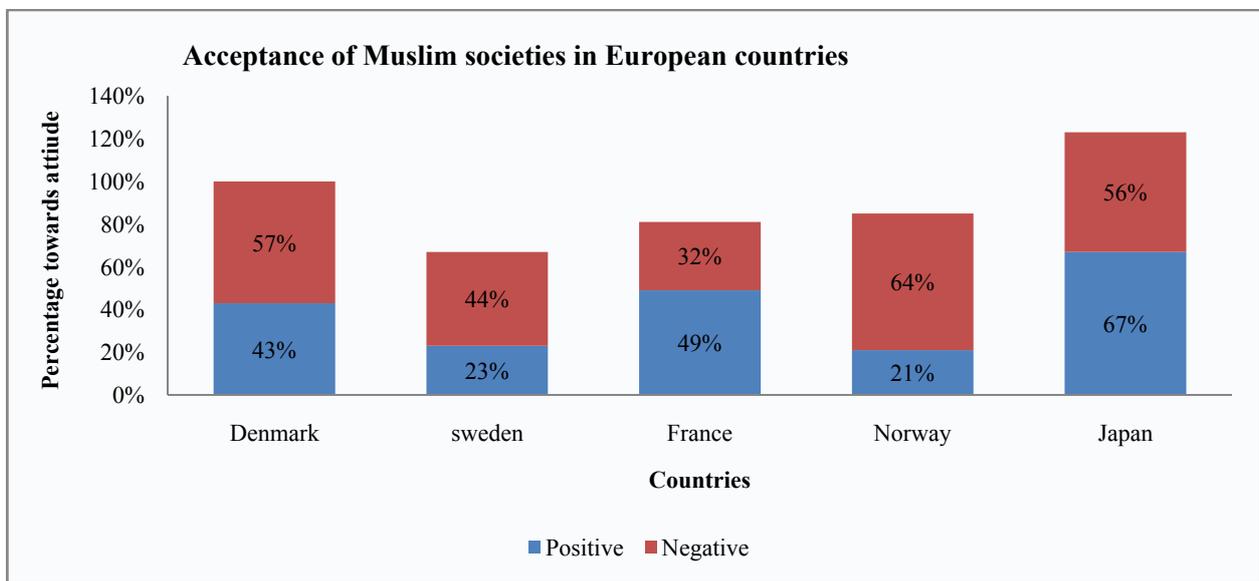


Figure 1. Acceptance of Muslim societies in European countries.

This research found that more than one-half do not concur that Muslims in the West are treated as equivalent residents. One-fourth of this population state Muslims in the West get equivalent treatment, while around one-fifth state they do not have a clue. This is another case of Muslims globally considered being as abusing Muslims in their nations. This conviction adds to the impression of Muslims being barred from social, political, and community life in Western social orders.

Of the individuals who state Muslim nations have negative perspectives on Twitter, more than one-half (92%) state it depends generally on falsehood given by the internet based life and radical in those nations about Muslim convictions and Islam. The individuals who state Muslims live in Western nations are not faithful and are substantially more prone to state these troublesome perspectives in Muslim nations are a direct result of deception by these nations' media and government. 64% have ominous perspectives given by the paper. The individuals who state Europeans Muslim are faithful to the state are still bound to state ideal perspectives in Muslim nations are because of their adoration with Islam and strict (78%) than to ominous activities.

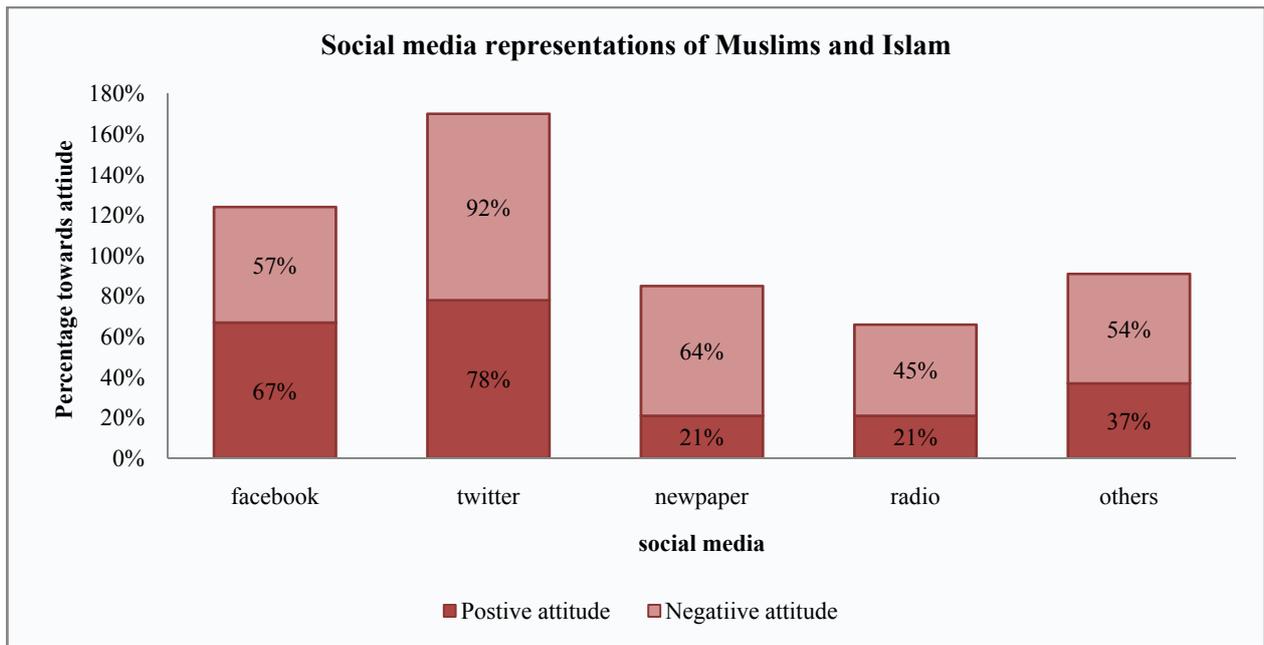


Figure 2. Social media representations of Muslims and Islam.

Table 1

*Reports the 10 Most Much of the Time Happening Words Found in the Articles*

Rank	Declaration	Frequency	Percentage
1	Extremist	435	1.45%
2	Radical	345	1.34%
3	Drastic	145	2.34%
4	Attack	860	3.45%
5	Harass	760	5.78%
6	Islam	990	6.87%
7	Freedom	560	4.65%
8	Independence	345	3.54%
9	Anger	445	1.47%
10	Brutal	442	1.46%

Table 1 demonstrates that 10 diverse Islam and media-related terms showed up in the chose articles. However, the most repeatedly utilized Islam and media-related term in the chose articles is “Islamist” which seemed 990 times, followed by “radical Islam” and “Islamist assaults”, which came next and third individually. The most regularly utilized term, Islamist activists, seemed multiple times in papers. Once more, the expressions “radical Islam” and “Islamist extremist” seemed 435 and multiple times in different publications.

### Discussion

The study unfolded that incidents around the globe including 9/11 and terrorist attacks on mosques in New Zealand have triggered fire against Islam and Muslims. The Western world has been greatly affected and concerned after such incidences in their perceptions about Muslims and Islam. The Middle East is greatly victimized and looked down in this perspective. The study of the literature reveals that Muslims and Islam are directly and unthoughtfully linked to terrorism, violence, and extremism. It has been noticed that Muslims and

Non-Muslims are restricted in common interactions and the media representation remains the main influential factor in building and driving the public opinion. The trends in negating common interactivity with Muslims have been found more aggressive in America while the European countries show absorbing capacity for Muslims and their religion. We have observed that Islamophobia is accelerated by the media misrepresentation of Muslims and Islam. Media needs to mature and treat Muslims as social entities and the protection of their basic human rights must be promised.

### Conclusion

Media has developed over the last few decades and its viewership and reach have also expanded across the globe. Satellite communication has boosted its use and acceptance. Media has been used as a source to deliver information and train the ideologies and opinion of the public. Islam and Muslims have been considered as a threat after the triggering incidences of 9/11 and others. Media has played a vital role in depicting the role of Muslims and Islam in this regime. It has stereotyped the image of Muslims and Islam and generated an anti-Muslim and anti-Islam content-based campaign. This results in building negativity in the minds of people both at local and global level. This has greatly harmed the Muslim community interacting and settled in the West. This study is done to evaluate the factors and trends involved in the media representation of Muslims and Islam. Qualitative analysis is performed based on the content of the literature and research articles. Inferences and findings have been provided for the neutralized and just content delivery on media.

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