THE REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN INDIAN NEWS MEDIA:
A CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study combines critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to explore how Islam and Muslims are portrayed in Indian news media. The analysis involves a 602,588-word corpus from three major Indian English-language newspapers covering a three-year period (January 1, 2019—December 31, 2022). The study employs collocation and concordance line analysis using Antconc software to identify key thematic categories. Among the notable findings, conflict and crime emerge as a prevalent theme, depicting Muslims, particularly men, as perpetrators in situations related to coercive religious conversion. Additionally, a significant focus on terrorism is evident, with Islam often simplistically associated with acts of terror, contributing to the preservation of stereotypes. Moreover, the use of terms such as "community" and "population" in association with Muslims fosters a sense of differentiation and collectivism, categorizing them as distinct groups.

Keywords: *corpus, critical discourse analysis, Islam, Muslims, representation*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini memadukan analisis wacana kritis dan linguistik korpus untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Islam dan umat Muslim digambarkan dalam media berita di India. Dengan menganalisis 602.588 kata dari tiga surat kabar berbahasa Inggris terkemuka di India selama tiga tahun (1 Januari 2019—31 Desember 2022), penelitian ini menggunakan analisis kolokasi dan konkordansi dengan menggunakan perangkat lunak Antconc untuk mengidentifikasi tema utama dari data korpus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan konflik dan kejahatan menjadi tema dominan, menggambarkan umat Muslim, terutama pria, sebagai pelaku dalam situasi yang terkait dengan paksaan konversi agama. Selain itu, terdapat fokus yang signifikan pada tema terorisme, dengan seringkali mengaitkan Islam dengan tindakan teror, yang berkontribusi pada mempertahankan stereotip. Lebih lanjut, penggunaan istilah"komunitas" dan "populasi" dalam konteks umat Muslim

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membentuk rasa perbedaan dan kolektivisme, mengkategorikan mereka sebagai kelompok yang berbeda.

Kata kunci: korpus, analisis wacana kritis, Islam, Muslim, representasi

1. INTRODUCTION

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse, influencing perceptions, and constructing narratives that contribute to the collective understanding of societal dynamics. In the context of India, where diverse cultures and religions coexist, the media's role becomes particularly pronounced. The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Indian news media has been a subject of scrutiny, marked by biases that have historical roots dating back to the establishment of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 (Sen, 2022). This ideological foundation laid the groundwork for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, with its emphasis on Hindutva, a political ideology that seeks to highlight the cultural and nationalistic identity of the Hindu community.

The Indian media landscape, encompassing radio and print, is not immune to external influences, often reflecting the interests of corporate entities or affiliations with major businesses (Kumar, 2011). This has presented challenges in maintaining impartial news coverage, leading to the perpetuation of stereotypes that label Muslims as invaders, traitors, backward, and oppressed (Drabu, 2018). The rise of Narendra Modi to power in 2014 brought about a discernible shift in the landscape, marked by a steady increase in crimes against the Muslim minority (Singh & Abbas, 2002). Policies enacted during his tenure, such as the Citizenship Amendment Bill of 2021, further intensified debates, raising concerns about exclusionary practices (BBC, 2019).

In December 2021, alarming reports surfaced of religious leaders advocating for the 'genocide' of Muslims, adding another layer to the complex interplay of religion, politics, and media representation in India (Mishra, 2021). Subsequent incidents, like the ban on Muslim students wearing hijab in government-run colleges in early 2022, triggered

protests and prompted discussions on the intersectionality of religion and education policies (Kukreja, 2022). Against this backdrop, this study seeks to answer two critical research questions: How is the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Indian news media? And, what are the common topics or issues that emerge in media discourse concerning Islam and Muslims? By exploring these questions, this study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between media representation, religious dynamics, and political ideologies, offering insights into the factors that shape public opinion on these significant issues.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Representation of Islam in the Media

The media representation of Islam underwent significant transformations before and after the events of 9/11. Prior to the attacks, scholarly investigations across various academic disciplines delved into the portrayal of Islam and Muslims with Edward Said's seminal work on Orientalism (1978) providing an introductory understanding. This concept highlighted power dynamics between the East and West, framing the West as superior and Orientalism as a mechanism for control and authority. However, in the aftermath of the catastrophic 9/11 attacks, a noticeable shift occurred in media depictions of Islam and Muslims. The magnitude of the tragedy drew substantial global attention, prompting news media to pivot their focus towards Islam. Scholarly analyses, such as those by Brown (2006) and Kumar (2010), pointed out a perceptible change in mainstream media's representation, which increasingly emphasized themes of religious extremism and conflict. This shift underscored the complex relationship between major global events, media narratives, and the construction of perceptions and identities for Islam and Muslims on a worldwide scale.

Concerning the representation of Muslims in media following the 9/11 events, Trevino et al. (2010) conducted research by comparing the

period before and after the 9/11 terror attacks. Their study focused on three prominent newspapers in America: The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and The Washington Post. The primary objective was to assess whether these newspapers exhibited a negative portrayal of Muslims following 9/11 and to identify substantial differences in how Muslims were depicted in the year before and the year after the attack. The research involved analyzing the editorial content of ten Sunday issues from each newspaper (five issues pre-September 11 and five post the tragic event) using a stratified random sample of 10 from each newspaper. The findings revealed that all three newspapers portrayed Muslims negatively after September 11, with no significant differences in their portrayals of Islam. Notably, the language used tended to be predominantly negative, with Muslims often labeled as terrorists, extremists, fundamentalists, radicals, and fanatics.

Furthermore, Baker (2010) analyzed how British tabloid and broadsheet newspapers represented Muslims and Islam from 1998 to 2009 using corpus-assisted discourse analysis. He generated a list of keywords and conducted a detailed contextual analysis with concordances. Tabloids tended to associate Islam with terrorism and extremism, often featuring problematic Muslim figures like Omar Bakri and Abu Hamza. In contrast, broadsheets covered Muslims in various contexts, with a primary focus on global conflicts. The study also highlighted the Daily Mail and the Daily Express's use of "Moslems" instead of "Muslims," which continued for a year despite a request from the Muslim Council of Britain to stop, as it resembled the Arabic word for "oppressor."

The dominant trend in existing research investigating the representation of Islam in media consistently reveals a prevalence of negative associations, particularly within Western media outlets such as those in the United Kingdom and the United States. This study then seeks to add to existing knowledge by investigating similar portrayals, though using different datasets: the Indian news media.

2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a valuable method for studying society. It focuses on how language, especially spoken or written communication, interacts with important social factors like power structures, institutions, ideologies, and social identities. CDA has its roots in linguistic studies, where scholars originally looked at language, text, and sentence meanings (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). But CDA goes beyond just language and text; it now includes a wider range of ideas, like how these aspects relate to power, identity, ideology, policy, and other societal issues. In essence, CDA covers two main things: semiotics (how signs and symbols convey meaning) and non-semiotics (additional elements) (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Semiotics in the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates how linguistic signs, including words and phrases, play a role in constructing meaning within discourse. However, the non-semiotic aspects cover factors beyond explicit signs and symbols, such as social context, power dynamics, and cultural influences, shaping discourse. Through this all-encompassing method, CDA thoroughly examines the intricacies of language usage, providing insights into both the linguistic and the broader socio-cultural dimensions that contribute to discourse analysis.

Some notable figures in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) include van Dijk, Fairclough, Kress, Leeuwen, and Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Wodak and Meyer are known for their Disourse-Historical Approach (DHA). They stress that when we analyze discourse (communication), we should consider the historical context in which it happens. According to Wodak, discourse, text, and genre (types of communication) are all interconnected (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). DHA is based on important principles like triangulation, which helps maintain objectivity. This means using various data sources, different analytical tools, and background information.

DHA aims to integrate historical knowledge about where and when the communication took place. It also looks at how different types of

communication change over time. Importantly, DHA doesn't look at information in isolation; it uses social theories to understand the bigger picture (Wodak, 2011, p. 65). To conduct a DHA analysis, specific tools and methods are used, as outlined in the table below (Reisigl and Wodak, 2017, p. 9). This analytical framework will be applied in this study to examine the corpus.

Table 1. DHA Discursive Tools

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
Referential/ nomination	Discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena /events, and processes/actions	• membership categorization devices, deictics, anthroponyms, etc. • tropes such as metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches (parsprototo, totumproparte) • verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions
Predication	Discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena/events /processes, and actions (more or less positively or negatively)	• stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits (e.g., in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctional clauses, infinitive clauses, and participial clauses or groups) • explicit predicates or

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
		predicative nouns/adjectives /pronouns • collocations • explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes, euphemisms) allusions, evocations, and presuppositions/impl icatures • other
Argumentation	Justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness	• topoi (formal or more content-related) • fallacies
Perspectivization, framing, or discourse representation	Positioning speakers or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance	• deictics • direct, indirect or free indirect speech • Quotation marks, discourse markers/parti cles • Metaphors • Animating prosody • Other

2.3. Corpus Linguistics

A corpus linguistics corpus is a collection of language samples from a specific community, organized based on the type of analysis and the unit of analysis (Cheng, 2012). This method involves digitally storing and manipulating these language samples, allowing researchers to

empirically study a wide range of texts, both spoken and written. Researchers use this method to investigate various aspects of language use, aligning with the study's objectives.

The analysis of corpus linguistic data involves compiling and examining data according to the chosen category and unit of analysis (Cheng, 2012, p.6). Key components of corpus linguistics include word lists, keywords, and concordance. Word lists consist of a substantial number of words from the original texts, while keywords represent frequently occurring words that reflect the main topic of the text. Concordance, on the other hand, is a list of words that often appear together and whose meanings may vary depending on the context (Adolphs, 2006).

In addition to word frequency lists, corpus linguistics provides statistical data on significant collocations. Collocation refers to how words tend to appear together in sentences. Stubbs (2001, p.24) defines collocation as the lexical relationship between two or more words that frequently occur near each other in a few syllables. Through statistical analysis, researchers can determine whether words are more likely to appear together than by chance. Collocation analysis aids in constructing a semantic profile and illustrates how a word is linked to specific meanings.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Corpus Compilation

The corpus of this study was compiled from **LexisNexis**, an online database that provides news archives from numerous sources, different countries, and various available languages. LexisNexis enables researchers to gather datasets from different newspapers over specified time intervals. It comprises features that enable advanced search of news articles by providing filters for researchers to select news texts required by using specific words or terms search.

Through LexisNexis, this study selected a total of 900 news articles from three major English-language newspapers in India: Hindustan Times, Indian Express, and Times of India, published in 2019—2021. Each newspaper consists of 300 news articles, with a division of 100 articles per year. The news stories were selected randomly without considering their political, social, or cultural content to avoid bias in the data. The corpus in this study was labeled as IND192021. The overview of the corpus can be found in the table below.

Table 2. IND192021 Corpus Overview

Corpora	Number of Articles	Number of Tokens
Hindustan Times	300	216,616
Indian Express	300	250,640
Times of India	300	135,332
Total	900	602,588

The corpus analysis was performed by utilizing AntConc. It is a free, cross-platform application designed for conducting research in corpus linguistics and facilitating data-driven learning developed by Laurence Anthony. This toolkit was employed to analyze corpus data including keywords, collocations, and concordances.

3.2. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, blending quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Two distinct methodological strands are employed: a corpus-based analysis, which utilizes specialized software to discern broader linguistic patterns and trends within the dataset, and a traditional critical discourse analysis (CDA), involving a meticulous examination of a select subset of texts from the corpus. The CDA component aims to identify discursive techniques, including the categorization of social actors, various forms of argumentation, and strategies discouraging intensification. This

methodological synthesis, as proposed by Baker et al. (2008), represents a heuristic approach, harmonizing substantive discourse analysis with corpus-assisted statistical tools, including keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis.

Collocation analysis in this study is conducted by employing search terms such as *Islam** and *Muslim**. The asterisk appended to each search term serves as a wildcard, encompassing any terms related to Islam and Muslim. For instance, the use of an asterisk with *Islam* (i.e., *Islam**) in keyword analysis identifies instances of "*Islam*" and also includes related terms like *Islamic* and *Islamist*.

In corpus linguistics, various methods are commonly utilized to calculate raw or normalized frequencies and to identify significant collocations. These methods encompass the chi-square test, mutual information (MI), t-score, z-score, and log-likelihood tests. In this study, statistical collocation analysis employs the Log Likelihood measure. Unlike the Rank by Frequencies method, Log Likelihood scores are considered more robust as they take into account the absolute frequency of each collocate. As noted by Xiao (2015, p.111), "the LL test consistently produces superior results in collocation extraction by encompassing both common and rare items as collocates."

Additionally, a five-word span is applied on both the right and left sides during the collocation analysis. Applying a five-word span enhances the robustness of the collocation analysis by considering a substantial context around each occurrence of the target word. This approach is particularly valuable when trying to extract collocations that encompass both common and rare items, providing a more nuanced understanding of the co-occurrence patterns in the corpus (Sinclair, 1991).

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Collocation of *Islam**

The lexical associations of *Islam** are determined by examining terms that co-occur more significant than normal distributions. Through

the examination, the top 10 terms that frequently collocate with *Islam** can be seen in Table 3. The list is formulated by excluding functional words and names that are insignificant to this study. It should be noted that the search with an asterisk could perform a wider analysis which is to show the collocates of *Islam* and terms within *Islam* such as *Islamic* and *Islamist*. Based on the analysis result, the term *Islam** collocates strongly with *converted*. Table 3 demonstrates 138 occurrences of *converted* when collocating with *Islam** across the IND192021 corpus. Following *converted*, the word *radical* ranks second in the results with 62 occurrences. Other than those two terms, there are some other forms of *convert* found in the collocation list that will be analyzed more closely in the next discussion.

Table 3. 10 most significant collocates of *Islam
within a 5L to 5R span**

Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood
converted	138	133	5	483.887
radical	62	54	8	208.817
convert	52	51	1	143.888
Jamia	40	38	2	122.162
forcibly	31	28	3	96.807
embrace	23	23	0	92.281
state	129	16	113	87.042
terrorism	49	14	35	85.884
jamaat	53	43	10	79.208
Christianity	22	9	13	67.767

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of 10 most significant collocates of *Islam**
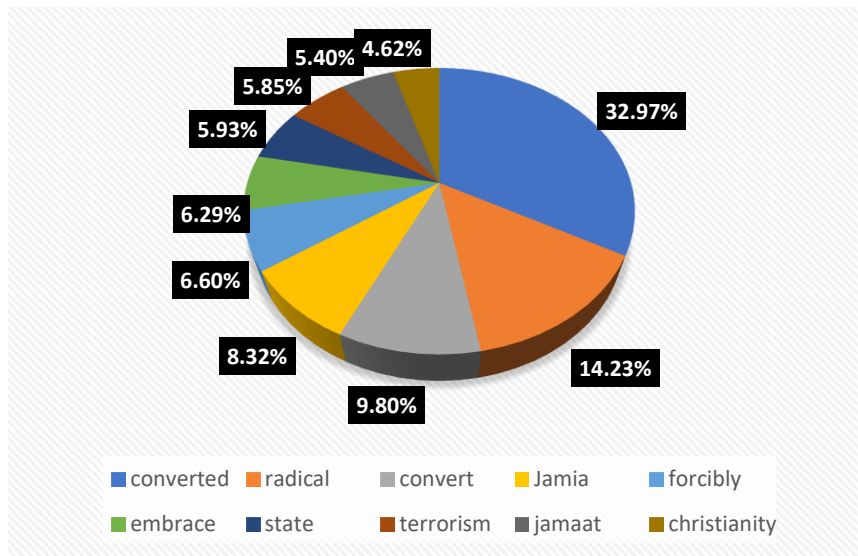
In order to see/discern a more precise illustration, the results are converted into a percentage presentation (see Figure 1). Moreover, the results are subsequently classified into thematical categories after performing a brief concordance review to determine suitable categories for each collocate (see Table 4). The classification of categories is not merely based on the meaning of each term but also on their context of use within the corpus. For example, the term *embrace* is categorized into 'conversion' classification because its existence in the corpus (through a brief concordance analysis) is widely related to the conversion topic.

Table 4. Categorization of *Islam** collocates

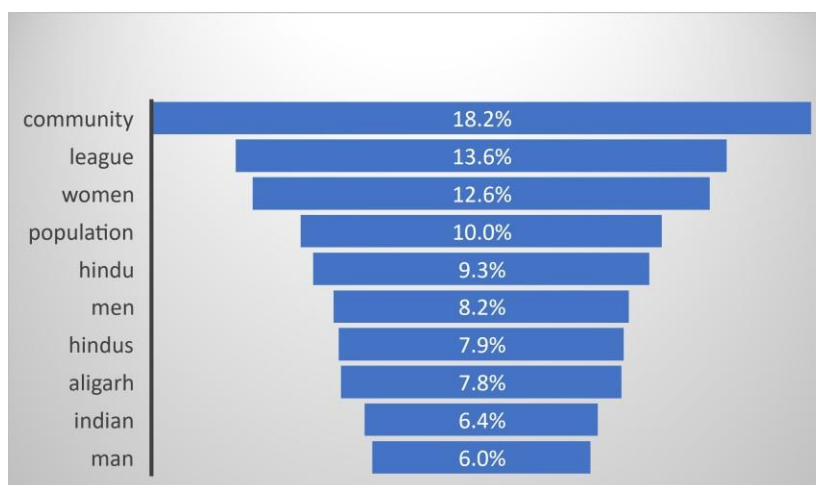| Categories	Collocates
Conversion	*converted, convert, forcibly, embrace*
Crime/Conflict	*terrorism*
Religion/belief/degree of belief	*Christianity, radical*
Others	*state, jamaat, Jamia*

4.2. Collocates of *Muslim**

In the entire IND_192021 corpus, the most significant term that collocates with *Muslims** is *community* with the highest log-likelihood calculation (see Table 5). The second place goes to *league* that coexists with *Muslim* in corpus for 13.6%. The majority of *Muslim** collocates are in the forms of noun depicting that this collocation act as actors or objects within the corpus.

Table 5. 10 most significant collocates of *Muslim*

Collocate	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Likelihood
Community	257	26	231	335.897
League	85	2	83	249.972
Women	194	19	175	232.852
Population	109	34	75	183.919
Hindu	227	158	69	171.164
Men	101	7	94	150.348
Hindus	137	98	39	145.204
Aligarh	56	53	3	142.958
Indian	243	176	67	118.82
Man	90	11	79	111.205

The list of 10 *Muslim** collocates is presented in percentage calculations to give a precise description of the collocation occurrences. The percentage is created into a graphic that is illustrated below.

Figure 2. The percentage distribution of *Muslim collocates**

The collocates of *Muslim** are also classified into several categories (see Table 6). Each category will be analyzed more closely in this section.

Table 6. Categorization of *Muslim** collocates

Categories	Collocates
Population	*community, population*
Gender	*women, men, man*
Religion	*Hindu, Hindus*
Nationality	*Indian*
Organisation/University	*league, Aligarh*

4.3. Discussion

This study investigates the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Indian news media through an analysis of collocations and concordance lines. The findings from the collocation analysis of *Islam** and *Muslim** in the IND_192021 corpus, which covers news media reporting in India from January 2019 to December 2021, reveal four primary thematic categories: conflict/crime, terrorism, collectivism, and differentiation concerning Islam.

4.3.1. Conflict/Crime

Predominantly, the corpus is characterized by content focusing on conflict and crime, particularly depicting Muslims as active participants in situations where they are portrayed as perpetrators, and non-Muslims as victims. This theme includes news reports on religious conversion, where terms like *converted, convert, embraced, forcibly*, and *men/man* frequently collocate with *Islam** and *Muslim*.*" Among these terms, four have neutral connotations, while *forcibly* carries a negative implication

Even though the term *convert* itself does not imply a negative connotation; concordance line analysis shows otherwise. Results of the analysis indicate that news coverage on this topic tends to cast an unfavorable or detrimental image of Islam and Muslims, primarily due to

reports of coercive conversions involving Muslim men and Hindu women. These articles commonly depict instances where non-Muslim girls, particularly Hindus, are allegedly coerced, manipulated, or enticed by Muslim men into converting to Islam. For example, an article published by the Hindustan Times reported a minor Hindu girl who was forced to convert to Islam (see extract 1). Additionally, a news report from Indian Express in extract 2 and also Times of India in extract 3 covers similar stories.

(1) Human rights activists from Pakistan and members of Indian community living in the United Kingdom held a protest outside the Pakistan High Commission in London to seek justice for Mehak Kumari, a minor Hindu girl who was reportedly **forcibly converted to Islam** and married to Muslim man in Sindh. (Hindustan Times, 18 February 2020)

(2) Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) has suspended the licence of an advocate after a complaint against him was received alleging that a woman was **forcibly converted to Islam** and he conducted her marriage at his chamber. (Indian Express, 5 July 2021)

(3) She further alleged that they again met in April 2017 when the accused forced her into a physical relationship and took objectionable pictures of her. She was **forced to convert** to Islam and later in mid-2017; she went to Srinagar where she was raped by five members of his family. (Times of India, 6 August 2019)

Consequently, the narratives in these news reports may portray Muslim men as violent or troublemaking individuals. Within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) framework, social actors,

including Muslim men, are characterized by predicates with negative undertones, such as *force, trick, target, manipulate, abduct, kidnap*, and *arrest*. This homogenization of Muslim men in the media aligns with previous research findings that have portrayed Muslim men as troublemakers, employing terms like *protesting, contesting, burning, stoning, attacking, fighting*, and *killing* (Samaie & Malmir, 2017). The excerpts below demonstrate some samples of news reports on Muslim men's depictions.

> (4) To Baldev, the protection of Hindu women is an essential part of social service because fraudulent conversions by "charming" **Muslim men are a threat to society** (Hindustan Times, 22 December 2022)
>
> (5) Members of the Hindu Jagran Manch, a right-wing outfit, then tried to get the **Muslim man arrested for "forced conversion" but were later booked for rioting**. (Times of India, (20 September 2021)
>
> (6) The stir began on Sunday after police said that the Sikh woman, a resident of Srinagar, was allegedly **abducted by a 29-year-old Muslim man**. (Hindustan Times, 28 June 2021)

The consistent collocation of "Muslim men/man" in reports on criminal activities or disturbances, without specifying individuals or perpetrators, tends to present Muslim men in a negative light. This portrayal is not unique and resonates with prior studies that have depicted Muslim men as dangerous, disruptive, or involved in criminal activities (Baker, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2018; Sian et al., 2012; Wigger, 2019). The representation of Muslim men as actors with troublesome characteristics, often affecting non-Muslim women, particularly Hindus, aligns with similar patterns observed in studies such as Sian et al. (2012) in the UK and Wigger (2019) in Germany.

The negative portrayal of Muslim men may be explained through Van Dijk's (1995) framework on racism, distinguishing between two types of discourses concerning the "other": one directed at the other and the other about the other. The former often coexists with a positive self-presentation and usually manifests as a negative depiction of the "other" among members of the dominant group. These members may use indirect derogatory language when communicating with individuals from the non-dominant group, reflecting the second type of discourse directed at the other.

In the context of religious conversion history in India, this issue is indeed perceived as a significant problem, prompting the Indian government to establish anti-conversion laws. These legal measures stem from the belief that religious conversions result not from personal choice or self-awareness but from the allure of incentives. Additionally, those who convert are considered vulnerable and easily influenced (Jenskin, 2008 p. 109).

Regarding news reports involving Muslim women, there is a notable difference in how the Indian media portrays them. Muslim women are often depicted as vulnerable individuals in the media (see extract 7 and 8). In this context, Muslim women are objectified within sentence structures, frequently portrayed as oppressed and subjected to discrimination, particularly concerning the practice of triple talaq.

(7) **Muslim women** are being discriminated against as they are not allowed to enter and pray in the main prayer hall of mosques," the petition said. (Times of India, 17 April 2019)

(8) **Muslim women** were always brought out as tokens to protect Islam. In a patriarchal world, they face both religious and gender oppression. (Indian Express, 15 November 2020)

This study's corpus analysis reveals a recurring theme related to the regulation of triple talaq, which is perceived as unjust towards

Muslim women. In Islamic practice, triple talaq occurs when a Muslim man pronounces divorce three times, verbally, in writing, or electronically. This practice is seen as detrimental to Muslim women, leading the Indian government to enact specific legislation. In 2017, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill was introduced, with a subsequent renewal in 2019, likely contributing to the topic's recurrent presence.

4.3.2. Terrorism

Another prevalent theme in the corpus is terrorism, evident through the collocation of "*Islam**" and "*terrorism*". Terrorism is frequently associated with Islam and Muslims, especially following acts of terror where Muslims are immediately labeled as perpetrators. This connection has contributed to the stereotype that terrorists are often Muslim. The analysis reveals a high frequency of keywords related to terrorism, such as "terrorist" and "terrorize," in conjunction with Islam and Muslims (see excerpts 9—11). This suggests a tendency in news coverage within the corpus.

> (9) The most sinister of these has been the use of **Islamist terrorism** to change the very character of Kashmiri Islam and make it more jihadist. (Indian Express, 1 September 2019)

> (10) Rajasthan Muslim Forum had earlier accused the police of not registering an FIR against the writers of both the state textbook and the guidebook, which also says the same. Quoting anonymous experts, the chapter also said "in **Islamic terrorism** the terrorist has excessive devotion to Islam rather than any faction or a group... (Times of India, 18 March 2021)

> (11) To Indians weary of **Islamist terror** from

> Pakistan-based groups, the Sri Lanka carnage bears familiar hallmarks. Professor of Security Studies at Singapore's Nanyang University and global terror expert of Sri Lankan origin, Dr Rohan Gunaratna, tells Padma Rao Sundarji in Colombo about the spread of the Islamic State (IS) in the region and the dangers it poses. (Hindustan Times, 10 June 2019)

News reports often highlight the connection between terrorism and Islam or Islamism, sometimes overshadowing the identities of the actual perpetrators. The consistent use of terms such as "Islamic" or "Islamist" can simplify the depiction of terrorist acts and potentially shape the perceptions of readers. This recurring association of Islam and Muslims with terrorism carries broader consequences for the community, underscoring the responsibility of editors and news outlets in their choice of words to mitigate potential negative impacts on public perception.

The framing of Islam in relation to terrorism in media representations is not a recent phenomenon and has intensified since the 9/11 attacks, influencing perceptions of Islam. For example, following the events of September 11, 2001, Australian media frequently portrayed Muslims as terrorists. Within the theme of terrorism, Muslims are also portrayed as holding extremist beliefs, as suggested by collocations featuring terms like *radical*. References to radical Islamic ideologies, radical Islamist groups, and similar terms are prevalent in the corpus, reflecting the newsworthiness of extremism due to its association with violent actions. It is worth noting that the appearance of *Islam* radical* in the corpus is linked to the April 2019 Easter terror attack in Sri Lanka, contributing to the prominence of this theme.

4.3.3. Differentiation and Collectivism

In terms of religion, the corpus analysis reveals two notable distinctions. Concerning Hinduism, Islam is frequently linked to

conflicts and issues, whereas in relation to Christianity, Islam is portrayed on an equal footing. The collocation results unveil a multifaceted and ongoing conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India. Unlike previous studies that often disparaged Islamic teachings when compared to other religions, this study indicates that the Indian media treats Islam and Christianity as equivalent minority religions.

Furthermore, this study identifies references to collectivism in association with Muslims in newspapers. Terms like "community" and "population" frequently co-occur with "Muslim*," suggesting that the news media positions Muslims as distinct groups or populations (see excerpt 12—13). Through the use of these terms, the media fosters a sense of differentiation, categorizing Muslims as "others" or out-groups. Additionally, Muslims are portrayed in terms of nationality and ethnicity, as seen in collocations such as "Indian Muslims" and "Sri Lankan Muslims."

> (12)   …one of its former members, PJ, was identified early by the Sri Lankan **Muslim community** as a "troublemaker". (Indian Express, 1 May 2019)

> (13)   There is a popular conception that India (read Hindus) must not rule out the possibility of an internal version of Taliban or an "Indian Taliban" precisely because there is a sizeable **Muslim population**. (Times of India, 15 October 2021)

According to the Discourse Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, in-groups and out-groups are formed through membership categorization tools and referential or nomination strategies. This process of distinguishing oneself from others, known as "othering," involves branding and categorizing individuals as different from one's own identity. This exclusion and stigmatization serve to establish and protect one's identity within a distinct framework.

5. CONCLUSION

Initially, the collocations with terms like "converted" and "embrace" suggested a neutral context. Nevertheless, a deeper qualitative analysis, examining concordance lines and co-occurring terms, revealed a nuanced and complex portrayal. Notably, Islam and Muslims were frequently associated with "converted" and "embrace" in reports concerning conflicts and crimes, often centering on Muslim men. These narratives tend to depict Muslim men as instigators in religious conversions, frequently using forceful actions against non-Muslim women, who were depicted as victims.

Moreover, the study detected the continued prevalence of terrorism-related topics in the media throughout the analyzed period. Stereotypical expressions such as "Islamic terrorism/terrorist" were identified, reflecting the sustained emphasis on terrorism, potentially influenced by India's proximity to Afghanistan, a region frequently linked with terrorism due to Taliban presence.

In employing a combination of corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study employed extensive data usage to reduce bias. However, it recognizes certain limitations, prompting consideration for future research. Mautner's (2009) insight into the significant impact of corpus size on discourse studies, particularly in facilitating computerized analysis, is acknowledged. This study which focused on three newspaper sources and 900 news articles, may yield findings with limited representativeness.

To enhance comprehensiveness, future studies could explore larger corpora encompassing a broader range of newspapers. Additionally, the study does not delve into the political orientation of newspapers, a critical aspect often examined in media representation studies. Despite this omission, future research opportunities could be conducted for a more thorough investigation of how each newspaper's political leaning influences its representation, providing deeper insights into the nuanced interplay between media discourse and political orientation.

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