

Statistical Analysis of Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri Case Coverage in Daily Express and Daily The Nation

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Abstract: Mumtaz Qadri sentenced to death and Salman Taseer's assassination were one of the conflicting religious issues of the country. In such conflicting environment dissemination of news through media has strong social and cultural influence on society. Daily express and Daily The Nation portrayed both issues with different angles and perceptions. This study relied upon method of content analysis of the two well-known Pakistani newspapers Daily Express and Daily The Nation. In this study researcher analyzed sixty two editions of the selected newspaper. The result of the study shows imbalance coverage on Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri's cases. Daily Express and Daily The Nation covered inadequately both the issues of religious tension that fuel more religious tension in the country and the nation is still curious between right and wrong. Both the newspapers have severely underestimated the severity of Mumtaz Qadri and Salman Taseer's issue.

Keywords: Pakistan, Media, Newspapers, Salman Taseer, Mumtaz Qadri, Murder, Media Coverage, content analysis, press consciousness, social responsibility, public awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a country with least tolerance on religious issues. The way media and religion are related to each other is unpredictable. It totally depends on the depiction of issues by media organizations and their interpretation by audience. In Pakistan newspapers are still considered the most credible and reliable medium to get information from. The way our newspapers covered Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral was beyond the lines of social responsibility function of the media.

"Social responsibility theory of press is the synthesis of ideas put forward in the Hutchins Commission report. It emphasized the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, accurate news reports. The most innovative feature of social responsibility theory was its call for media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative "Great Communities". It said that media should do this by prioritizing cultural pluralism, by becoming the voice of all the people not just of elite groups or groups that dominate national, regional, or local culture" [1].

The coverage given by the newspapers on these two incidents was full of ambiguity. Till date our nation remains confused about right and wrong in this case. In

our society newspapers play a vital role in not only shaping public opinion but also decision-making of top government authorities.

Newspapers have a profound effect on readers, so it is necessary for them to interpret religious conflicts in their proper context. There was a large disparity in portrayal of this case by English and Urdu newspapers.

Mumtaz Qadri was sentenced to death in October 2011 [2]. The judiciary faced a lot of criticism. Pakistan is a country with overwhelming majority of Muslims, who do not tolerate disrespect to religious figures.

This study focuses on the role of newspapers in covering Salman Taseer murder case. There has been very little research work on the coverage of this case.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab province of Pakistan, was assassinated by his security guard Mumtaz Qadri for taking a public stance against Pakistan's blasphemy law. Mumtaz Qadri was trialed in an anti-terrorism court and was sentenced to death on two accounts. The public remains confused over whether this was a victory for anti-blasphemy law campaigners or will it lead to more violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research conducted by Yang Lai Fong and Md. Sidin Ahmed Ishak in 2011 in Malaysia showed that articles published by four newspapers gave unequal attention to the Lina Joy controversy. It concluded that journalists should report and interpret religious tensions in their proper social, economic and political contexts

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as lack of contextual reporting will only enhance misunderstanding among public [3].

In 2013, Muhammad Hassan, Zafar Ali, Ashraf Iqbal and M. Riaz Raza conducted a comparative study of editorial treatment of Dawn and The News regarding Lal Masjid operation. The objectives of the study was to find out how much coverage was given to this issue by print media, to know the tone of media when reporting Lal Masjid issue, to find out how media is dealing with national issues. Quantitative and qualitative analysis was done which led to the conclusion that media of Pakistan was biased in portraying the Lal Masjid issue because it was supporting the government agenda [4].

A comparative analysis of Pakistani English newspapers editorials was conducted by Hayat N.* and Juliana, A.W. from school of communication, University Sains in 2016 following Taliban's attack on Malala Yousafzai. This study is a comparative analysis of Pakistan's four leading English language newspapers. It examines the portrayal of Malala Yousafzai and anti-Taliban feeling after the incident. The study found that Pakistan's newspapers portrayed Malala as an innocent girl, as an activist and as courageous in their editorials. Selected newspapers portrayed Taliban as terrorists, anti-development and fanatics in their editorials. The research revealed that Taliban were portrayed more as fanatics than as terrorists. This article presented a comparative analysis of twenty nine editorials from four different English newspapers [5].

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study is to investigate the role of English and Urdu newspapers in covering sensitive religious issues like blasphemy with responsibility and to know the balance of coverage, to find out how newspapers escalate or resolve conflicts.

Theoretical Perspective of the Study

Uma Sakaran and Roger Bougie suggested that theoretical framework is the conceptual model to proceed with the investigation. It is an explanation of why researchers believe that a relationship exists among the variables.

"The process of building theoretical framework consists of introducing definition of the concepts or variables in your model, developing conceptual model that provides a descriptive representation

of your theory and coming up with the theory that provides an explanation for relationships between the variables in your model" [6].

The theoretical framework of this study has been chosen under considered judgment of researchers. Following are the theories that have been examined:

Agenda setting.

Framing theory.

Agenda Setting Theory

While defining agenda setting Bernard Cohen wrote:

"Press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its reader what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interest, but also on the map that is drawn by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read" [7].

Maxell Mc Comb and Donald Shaw in their research "The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media" wrote that newspaper coverage influences what issues the public should think about.

"Agenda setting is most appropriately categorized as a post positive theory and it is reasonable to evaluate agenda setting theory on the criteria of accuracy, consistency, simplicity, scope and fruitfulness" [8].

Iyengar and Kinder found that placement of the story is an important factor which influences the reader. Lead stories have a greater agenda setting effect because of two reasons: first, people pay more attention to the beginning of the news; second, people imagine that a lead story is newsworthy because of its designation [9]. Newspapers are the market place for ideas. Coverage frequency and content priority set agenda and influence public, government and policy makers.

Framing Theory

Framing is an individual's set of expectations to make sense of social world and media contributes to those expectations [10]. Tewksbury and Powers

conducted a research on The Effects of Frames on Readers and suggested that

“Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage for the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented” [11].

The concept of framing is a tool to explain the presentation of Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri issue in newspaper content of The Nation and Daily Express.

Research Questions

- R1= How many news stories were covered by Daily Express and The Nation on Salman Taseer's assassination?
- R2= How many editorials were published by The Nation and Daily Express on Salman Taseer's assassination?
- R3= How many news stories were carried by The nation and Daily Express on Mumtaz Qadri's funeral?
- R4= How many editorials were published on Mumtaz Qadri's funeral by The Nation and Daily Express?

Hypothesis

- H1: Daily Express and Daily The Nation newspapers covered proportionately and effectively Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral.
- H2: Daily The Nation gave equal coverage to Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral.

Null Hypothesis

- Ho1: Daily Express and Daily The Nation newspapers covered disproportionately and ineffectively Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral.
- Ho2: Daily The Nation did not gave equal coverage to Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral.

Methodology

This paper adopted Quantitative approach of content analysis to investigate. Rhetorical content analysis helped to understand how Salman Taseer's

assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral were covered and depicted in these newspapers. Rhetorical analysis focuses on how many messages are delivered and with what (intended or actual) effects [12].

Quantitative Content Analysis

In this study researchers endeavour to determine the coverage frequency of Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral in the selected newspapers.

“Quantitative newspaper content analysis evidently provided the needed scientific ground for journalistic arguments. The respect for numbers have long history and fact that can be quantified were considered undeniable” [13].

In this study data were obtained from content analysis of news stories and editorials in Daily Express and The Nation.

Study Population

The study population of this paper comprised sixty two editions of Daily Express and The Nation for a period of one month (5st January, 2011-31st December, 2011 and 1st March 2016 till 31st march 2016).

The reason to take this time period was that the date of Salman Taseer's assassination was 4th January 2011 and the date of Mumtaz Qadri's funeral was 29th February 2016.

Data Collection Tool

Data for this study was collected from 5th January, 2011 to 31st January, 2011 and 1st march, 2016 to 31st March, 2016 from Daily Express and The Nation. The newspapers were examined page by page to identify all published news stories and editorials about the two events. The newspapers were sourced from the Archive room of State Bank of Pakistan library.

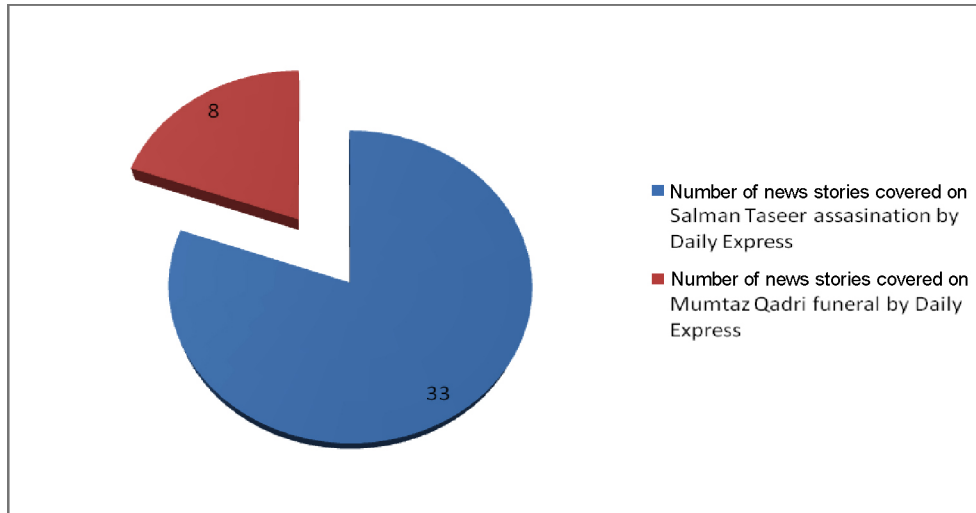
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Krippendorff (2004) suggested that tables are a more useful tool for researchers than the textual data. He characterized tabulation as “by far the most common technique used to render data comprehensible”.

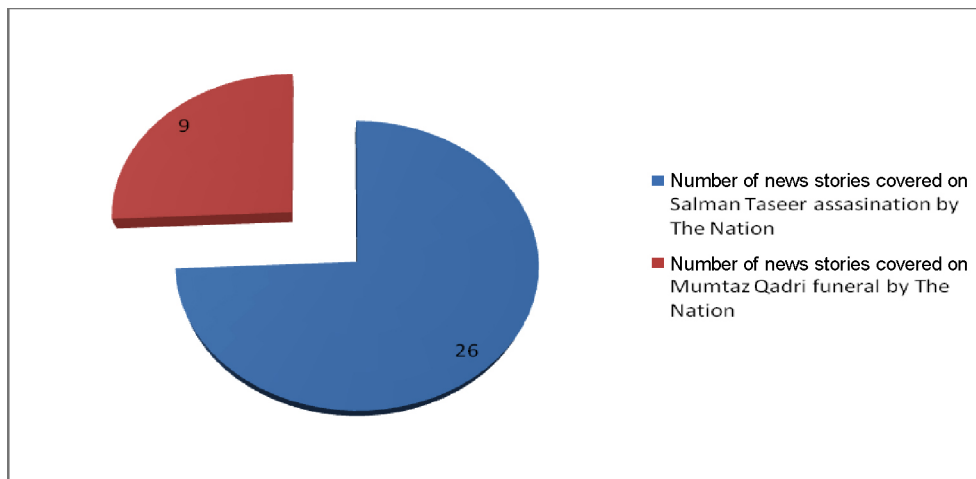
Thus the data for this study are presented in tabular form.

GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF DATA

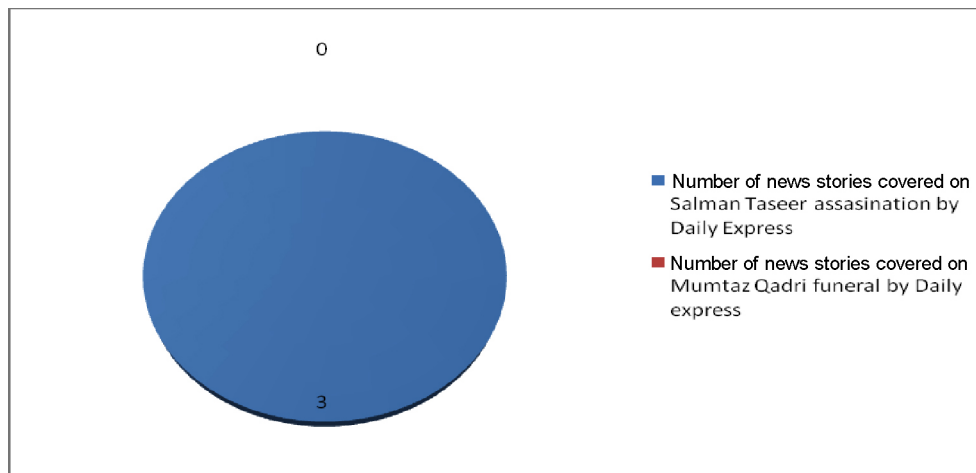
News Stories by Daily Express on Salman Taseer Assassination & Mumtaz Qadri Funeral



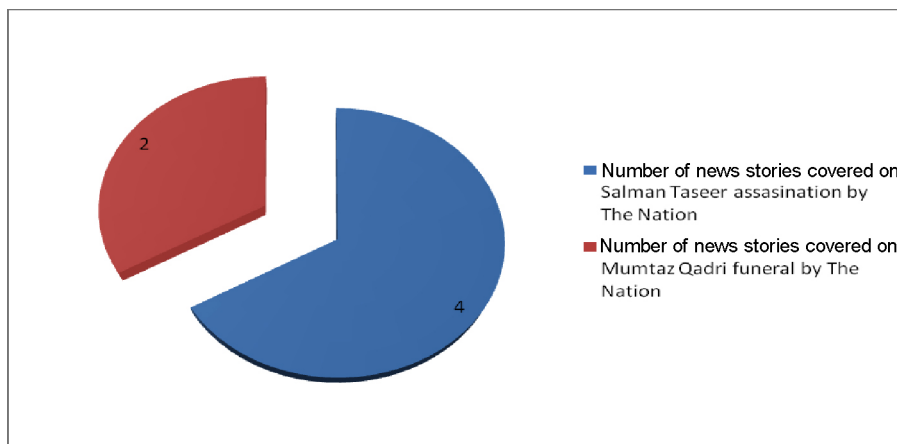
News Stories by the Nation on Salman Taseer Assassination & Mumtaz Qadri Funeral



Editorials Published by Daily Express on Salman Taseer Assassination & Mumtaz Qadri Funeral



Editorials Published by the Nation on Salman Taseer Assassination & Mumtaz Qadri Funeral



Salman Taseer's Assassination Coverage In The Nation:-

From 5TH -January -2011 till 31ST -January-2011

Table 1:

NEWSPAPER	FRONT PAGE NEWS	CITY PAGE NEWS	EDITORIALS
The Nation	06	20	04

Salman Taseer's Assassination Coverage in Daily Express:-

From 5TH -January -2011 till 31ST -January-2011

Table 2:

NEWSPAPER	FRONT PAGE NEWS	CITY PAGE NEWS	EDITORIALS
Daily Express	30	13	03

Mumtaz Qadri's Funeral News Coverage in the Nation:-

From 1ST -March-2016 till 31ST -March-2016

Table 3:

NEWSPAPER	FRONT PAGE NEWS	CITY PAGE NEWS	EDITORIALS
The Nation	07	02	02

Mumtaz Qadri's Funeral News Coverage in Daily Express:-

From 1ST -March-2016 till 31ST -March-2016

Table 4:

NEWSPAPER	FRONT PAGE NEWS	CITY PAGE NEWS	EDITORIALS
Daily Express	07	01	0

As shown in the data of Tables 1 and 2 the total number of news stories covered by The Nation and Daily Express on Salman Taseer assassination was sixty nine whereas the total number of news stories covered by the selected newspapers on Mumtaz Qadri funeral was seventeen as represented in Tables 3 and 4. The number of news stories published in the study context shows that newspapers did not give reasonable prominence to both incidents and the coverage is imbalanced.

The data from Tables 1 and 2 show that the total number of editorials published by Daily Express and The Nation on Salman Taseer's assassination was five and Tables 3 and 4 show the total number of editorials published on Mumtaz Qadri's funeral was two.

Socially responsible newspapers work as a wheel for society. Editorials are the reflection of intellectuals of any society on any particular issue. So the number of editorials published on Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri issue was inadequate.

Researchers indicated in their research on Lina Joy's controversy in Malaysia that when newspapers cover religious tension without context it will only accelerate misunderstanding. The same happened to Mumtaz Qadri and Salman Taseer cases. The coverage of the funeral of Mumtaz Qadri and the coverage of assassination of Salman Taseer was without contextual background that caused misunderstanding about blasphemy law in Pakistan.

A research conducted on Lal Masjid operation in 2013 concluded that media of Pakistan was biased in covering Lal Masjid issue. Researchers adopted content analysis method of newspapers and the finding showed that the newspapers were supporting the government agenda. Seemingly in Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri cases there was a huge difference between published news stories and editorials.

A study was conducted in Malaysia on Malala Yousufzai attack by Taliban to examine the portrayal of Malala and Taliban in Pakistan's newspapers. The way newspapers frame stories builds public opinion.

Most importantly, the silence of newspapers on blasphemy law of Pakistan that is linked with the cases fuels tension. Overall the coverage related to awareness of Blasphemy Law on Salman Taseer's assassination and Mumtaz Qadri's funeral was imbalanced. There should have been balanced

coverage of both events because this religious issue needs to be covered extensively with full clarity.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In Pakistan newspapers are considered as the most credible and responsible member of mass media. People rely on newspapers for in-depth understanding of different current issues with the help of the editorials. Editorials reflect the newspapers' policy.

Pakistan's newspapers must create awareness about the misuse of blasphemy laws and must address the misrepresentation of Islamic traditions. Media houses, especially newspapers, need to decide on which course they want to put Pakistan on. If Pakistan's media houses do not speak and act to stop the common man from becoming criminal, we will continue to see Ghazis turn to Shaheeds.

So it is concluded that for newspapers in Pakistan the stakes are very high and they are expected to lead the struggle against misrepresentation of religious issues. It is also concluded that Daily Express and The Nation gave disproportionate coverage on Salman Taseer and Mumtaz Qadri issue. It should be balanced because there are still many questions on this issues that remain unanswered.

It is the duty of mass media to educate the masses. Blasphemy is one of the most crucial issues which is never openly addressed by media. It creates confusion and also creates radicalism in society.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

No one's work is beyond limitations. First because of the time limit, this study depends upon small size of population that covers one Urdu newspaper and one English newspaper. Therefore, to generalize the result the study should involve more newspapers. In addition, since the newspapers were examined by researchers, there can be some degree of subjectivity in data analysis and data collection.

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