

Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Bollywood During Modi Era (2019-2022)

Aadil Fiaz

MS Scholar, Department of Media and Communication Studies International Islamic University,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Muhammad Junaid Ghauri

Lecturer, Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University
Islamabad, Pakistan.

muhammadjunaid@iiu.edu.pk

Nadia Saleem

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Virtual University of Pakistan,
Lahore.

Abstract

The main focus of this study is to explore the representation of Islam and Muslims in the Bollywood movies during Modi era (2019-2022). We intend to explore how Islam and Muslims have been portrayed in the selected Bollywood movies. In this context we have accomplished content analysis of top four Bollywood movies portraying the image of Islam and Muslims during the era of Narendra Modi i.e. 2019-2022. Within the premise of framing theory and with the help of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the selected movies this research finds out that the representation of Islam and Muslims in these movies is stereotypically negative. Our findings show that Islam and Muslims have been attributed with terrorism and negative roles in the selected movies; Kashmir Files, Tanhji, Panipat and Sooryanvanshi. Muslim characters have been portrayed negatively in terms of their appearances, language, and profession which, apparently, promote hatred against the Islam and Muslims.

Keywords: *Islam, Muslims, Bollywood, Kashmir Files, Tanhji, Panipat and Sooryanvanshi, Representation, Narendra Modi Era, Framing*

1. Introduction

Indian film industry, Bollywood, is a very strong medium to build public opinion or reshape it within and outside India. Many research findings have claimed that the image of Islam and Muslims is being portrayed negatively throughout the globe, especially to defame and disgrace the religion and its followers. The spread of pessimism in this context has been described as irrational hostility, fear or hatred towards Islam, Muslims, Islamic culture, and active discrimination against these groups or individuals within them (Ghauri et al., 2021; Ghauri & Umber, 2019; Hussain et al., 2019; Khan & Bokhari, 2011; Umber, Ghauri & Nawaz, 2020; Umber & Ghauri, 2020). This in-depth investigation explores the subtle subtleties of how Islam and Muslims have been portrayed in Bollywood, India's thriving film industry, in the particular setting of the Modi era, which runs from 2014 to 2022. Indian film industry is a very strong medium to build public opinion or reshape it. While several studies have already addressed how Islam and Muslims are portrayed in Bollywood films, our main goal—building on the literature that has already been written—is to offer a current and in-depth examination of the industry's involvement in maintaining unfavorable

perceptions against Islam and Muslims. In order to evaluate the impact of Bollywood films produced during the Modi administration on perceptions of Islam and Muslims, we will closely examine their themes, characters, and plot lines. We aim to provide light on the intricate interactions between cinema, cultural attitudes, and political settings by grounding our analysis in pertinent literature on Islamophobia within Bollywood. Our research attempts to provide a thorough knowledge of how Bollywood has shaped and reflected the growing discourse surrounding Islam and Muslims in current India by addressing these complex dimensions.

These anti Islam and Muslim elements have long history in India, but the current era of Modi has peddled this irrationality to disgrace the image of Islam and Muslims in India. Dr. Manmohan Singh, who served as the Prime Minister before Modi, has been portrayed in a Bollywood movie in 2019 as “The Accidental Prime Minister” being a puppet of the powerful Nehru-Gandhi family, known as the “first family of Indian politics” because three of its members had held the position. When the BJP published a link to the teaser on its official Twitter account, it was evident that they approved of the movie (The Hindu, 2018 December 28). Because of this, hostility and anti-Islamic attitudes are not a new phenomenon, and even while there are indications of them, it is still debatable what precisely qualifies as anti-Muslim or anti-Islamic behavior (Bhat, 2019; Khan & Bokhari, 2011; Sen, 2022). Moreover, this hatred, disgrace and pessimism towards the image of Islam and Muslims is actually being propagated from west especially after 9/11 and subsequently it spread all over the globe. It is commonly and unequivocally noted that the 9/11 catastrophe altered the course of history. It appears that the fight against terrorism has engulfed the entire world if we look at global politics. Subsequently, its consequences reached every corner of the world through the representation of Foreign Islam and national Islam (Iwanek, 2016).

Therefore, the main objective of this research attempt is to explore the representation of Islam and Muslims in Bollywood movies during Modi era (2019-2022). We have a broad research question to be answered i.e. How did the selected Bollywood movies; *Kashmir Files*, *Tanhji*, *Panipat* and *Sooryanvanshi* represent Islam and Muslims during the era of Narendra Modi (2019-2022)?

2. Literature Review

A compelling fusion of entertainment and art, films have intrigued audiences for over a century. They take viewers to both natural and fantastical worlds as they reveal heartwarming and amusing tales. Directors and cinematographers carefully craft every frame, while actors give our favourite or least favourite characters’ life. The interest of viewers is captured by editors who use images to create compelling stories, and by composers who evoke feelings through their music. Movies have an everlasting ability to inspire, amuse, and leave a lasting impression on human beings (Andrew et al., 2023).

Cinema is become a powerful mass medium from the day it was invented. Without any doubt, the film industry grew very fast and made changes in society. Approximately all individuals of the society have gone to the cinema hall to enjoy the movie. Jovett and Linton stated that “apparently there is still somewhat distinctive and naturally tempting regarding going cinema hall to watch movies”, and this is undoubtedly diverse from other mass media experiences. It would be hard to imagine our culture without them because they have not only entertained us but also given us ideas. The movies begin by focusing on the facets of society that we are accustomed to. They employ various narrative techniques, such as twist plots, to add enough fresh parts to the story to draw in readers. Movies depict scenarios that are similar to the anxieties and goals that viewers have for their lives daily by substantially drawing inspiration from reality (Witty, 1956).

In general, movies have a big influence on society. It introduces fresh customs, ideas, and trends, etc. Movies have the power to both form and change opinions. Movies change dated fashions,

habits, and practices. A strongly held belief has the potential to spread from one civilization to another. India is one of the most recognized and powerful film industries in the world. Bollywood's powerful effect and influence have grown, nearly reaching hegemonic status. (Wood & Brown, 2012). Cinema is a medium for artistic expression. It carries out the duties of mass media. such as knowledge, instruction, amusement, and cultural transfer. Movies are incredibly popular, and because they are audio-visual, they have a strong societal influence (IvyPanda, 2023). Bollywood is demonising Islam and portraying Muslims as terrorists. The perception of Islam and Muslims doesn't seem as favourable as it may be. In particular, after the 9/11 attack, Bollywood and the Western media have been instrumental in strengthening this image (Khan & Bokhari, 2011).

Thus, it is an important issue that Indian cinema attempts to depict Muslims as evil people. The topic was selected for study because, following 9/11, Muslims and terrorism were significant issues, particularly in India during the Modi administration. On this subject, the international media has been extremely critical. In the meantime, Bollywood is doing its part to fan the flames of the stereotype that Muslims are terrorists. Thus, the goal of this research is to critically examine how Muslims and Islam are portrayed in Bollywood films from the Modi era.

In this period of media companies, media moguls, and media domination in the development of a conceptual image, it is not about the production of our social relations. Even, electronic digital and print media, like film, moreover assist in the formation of such cognitive imagery. The images seen in the film carry unique marks on the audience's mind. Films leave impacts like a fairytale. That will carry the audience to unfamiliar, or even impossible, places. The importance of movies to image-making is unavoidable. When films shape the picture, they can alter the picture in much the same manner. It's a very useful manipulation device. The purpose of this article is to research and explore how Bollywood movies represent Islam and Muslims in Bollywood movies during the Modi era.

India has achieved enlightening its vast mass of online platforms. Islamic violence is larger than the number of films that depict and represent Muslims in an optimistic state of mind. They always portray Muslims as negative and deceiver grew during .in the time of 1990 to 2005. Producers are often inspired by their current environment. In the first several decades, however, the Muslim theme of Bollywood films was primarily portrayed by the colonial rulers and the nobility. Later periods saw further films about the middle-class Muslim community and the international situation in the presence of Hindutva patriotism in the previous two decades. The international situation experienced revolutionary encounters under the face of Hindu nationalism. Cinema as a means of cultural and social progress has had an influence and has often mirrored the present situation. We may claim that it simply caught and transformed into a visual story of what was really in the breeze. And it may also be claimed that it confirms current prejudices by political thought (Ali, Chaudhry, & Faridi, 2012).

In the Modi era, hatred against Islam and Muslims has become a norm and not a fringe occurrence. Of course, since Modi became prime minister in 2014, this hatred towards Islam and Muslims has become a matter of his state policy. However, from the second term (2019) his policy become more aggressive and anti-Muslim, which is evident from the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A (special status of Jammu and Kashmir), CAA and especially the portrayal of the negative image of Islam and Muslims in Bollywood movies (Sen, 2022).

Consequently, in this particular environment, the spread of this intolerance and hostility has led to the emergence of Islamophobia, a type of prejudice and intolerance driven by suspicion, fear, and hate of Islam and those who practice it. It frequently appears in conjunction with prejudice against immigrants, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance towards different religions. Hate speech, physical

assaults, and discriminatory acts are examples of Islamophobic manifestations, and they can come from both state actors and non-state actors. Hatred towards Muslims and prejudice against the Islamic perspective have been the root causes of hate speech, intolerance, and prejudice in India since the early 1900s.

These views have been propagated in numerous ways by Hindu fundamentalists through countless public outbursts and heinous deeds. Following the 2019 April/May legislative elections, in which supporters of the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which secured a majority and established its second national administration, aired anti-Islamic slogans overseas, the situation unquestionably deteriorated. Hindutva, an ideology supported by extremist groups like the Indian Mahasabha, RSS, VHP, and others, was legalized by the BJP, which was desperate to win. The party's most often used campaign slogan, "India for Hindus only," incited minorities in general and Muslims in particular. Arjun Sampath, a Hindu supremacist and BJP supporter from Tamil Nadu urged Hindus to boycott Muslim-owned businesses, stigmatize them, and label them as "pro-Pakistani" during the 2019 campaign. He said that every Muslim in Tamil Nadu was attempting to establish a miniature Pakistan. Similar unproven claims made their way around Kerala. Speaking in hateful speeches, Arjun and others advised Hindus not to support Muslim candidates. In Tamil Nadu, Hindutva militants started open conflicts where previously there was brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims. The ruling BJP's national secretary, H Raja, ran for the Tamil Nadu seat of Shivagangai and made inflammatory comments that incited communal riots and other hostile actions by Hindus against Muslims. He was the origin of all disputes throughout Tamil Nadu, the Dravidian state, between Muslims and Hindus.

As a result, this study highlights the causes and developments of Islamophobia in India, starting with the RSS and Shiv Sena leaders' adoration for Mussolini and Hitler. According to Savarkar, Golwalker, and Thackeray, the initial attempt to seize the Babri Mosque was a reflection of Hindutva's fabrication of Islamophobia. Acknowledging the current situation, the author recommends several actions to foster better Hindu-Muslim ties by focusing on shared interests (Ushama, 2020).

Similarly, Kunnummal (2022) showed that throughout the past 100 years, militant Hindu nationalist parties like the RSS have been the main propagators of the most obvious type of Islamophobia in India. The primary tenet of this specific strategy against Islamophobia is a prearranged attempt to mentally sway the "innocent masses." Nevertheless, the politics of some prominent figures and their deliberate attempts to create narratives that further polarize Indian communities and isolate Muslim minorities are not the only sources of Islamophobia. On the other side, Ali and Mutiah (2022), inform that all forms of hatred and violent expression are used to propagate Islamophobia in India, according to a study on the subject that was conducted in March 2020. One such tactic is the use of Muslims, particularly those who were part of the Tablighi Jamaat, as scapegoats for the COVID-19 virus's widespread spread in the country. In an attempt to place Muslims under suspicion for the propagation of COVID-19 in India, there is senseless violence, and bigotry, along with the use of hashtags on social media.

Therefore, the propaganda against Muslims in India has been spread all over the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, in this regard, Ushama (2021), discussed in his study how extremists use the COVID-19 outbreak to fuel Islamophobia in India. There is an increase in anti-Muslim language and activities, according to content analysis of papers, talk websites, news bulletins, magazines, YouTube, and social media. It draws attention to campaigns' purposeful disinformation and outrages. These include calling out Muslims for the outbreak, refusing them medical care, having doctors officially justify the killing of Muslim patients with coronavirus, and damaging,

boycotting, and vandalizing Muslim residences, businesses, and booths while the COVID-19 lockdown is in effect.

It highlights the deliberate misinformation and outrages used by campaigners. These include blaming Muslims for the outbreak, denying them access to healthcare, getting doctors to formally legitimize the coronavirus-related deaths of Muslim patients, and causing harm, opposing, and vandalizing Muslim establishments, shops, and booths during the COVID-19 lockdown. After the 1947 partition of India, animosity between Muslims and Hindus grew daily, and acts of violence against Muslims peaked due to several geopolitical, economic, and religious issues. The Muslim community has numerous difficulties, such as numerous murders, assaults, discrimination, and harassment because of Islamophobia, which primarily targets Indian Muslims.

Since 1947, Muslims in India have been the most vulnerable ethnic and religious community when it comes to hate crimes. Islamophobia in India has become more extreme, manifesting itself in acts of violence and acts of terror against Muslims, including riots and murders. While earlier research emphasizes the proactive role political organizations and non-governmental groups play in combating Islamophobia, state institutions within India have not been capable of handling the problem of hate crimes committed against Muslims living in the country. Muslims have experienced increased marginalization and vulnerability in India over time. Additionally, the Muslim community is facing more discrimination in the workplace and schools due to hate crimes and Islamophobia.

Therefore, in the Indian context, Islamophobia has been a tool for political parties especially, the BJP which is evident in their speeches, particularly during election expeditions. However, Bollywood didn't like to sustain behind the shadows, besides has played a profiled role in propagating hatred against Muslims and Islam. It is currently the biggest movie-making industry in the world, creating movies for audiences around the globe. It has a significant impact on shaping public opinion. Simultaneously, it becomes a fundamental resource for comprehending Islam and Muslims both domestically and globally. Bollywood's blockbuster films are frequently exported to the UK and the USA with subtitles. The Washington Post and the New York Times now publish reviews of Bollywood films. The portrayal of Muslims in Indian movies is more negative than positive. These movies are considered against Muslims and try to stereotype Muslims negatively not only in Indian society but all over the world. Through this effective medium, Bollywood is demolishing the Image of Islam and Muslims across the globe (Zafar and Amjad, 2015).

The portrayal of Muslims in Indian movies is more negative than positive. These movies are considered against Muslims and try to stereotype Muslims negatively not only in Indian society but all over the world. Through the effective medium, Bollywood is demolishing the Image of Islam and Muslims across the globe (Khan and Bokhari, 2011). It is important to mention that Bollywood cinema is very popular not only in South Asia but also all across the world and the messages sent by Hindi movies reach a very wide audience. It has also been observed that generally, the media has a very strong position in defining specific connections that represent minority groups. Also, popular culture, especially after 9/11, has played a key role in highlighting Islam, terrorism and the Arab world. Bollywood presents Muslims as extremists, and bad people and portrays Pakistan as a haven for domestic and foreign terrorists.

In almost every movie, there lies a connection of Muslims and Pakistan with criminal/terrorist activities or supporting them contrary to the fact that 200 million Muslims live in India as well. Having said that, there are certain movies such as *My Name is Khan*, *Chak De India*, and *Amir*, where the central characters are Muslims who try to prove that they are not related to terrorism of any sort and are faithful nationals. However, these movies also give the notion that a Muslim must

prove that he or she is not a terrorist but a patriotic nationalist to survive. Bollywood thus forms an excellent case to determine the complexity of the relationship between politics, culture, patriotism and nationalism as disseminated and propagated through movie narratives (Athique, 2008).

The researcher explained that the Hindutva campaign has tried to demonize Muslims as enemies and to view them as monsters. This demonization and marginalization were successfully constructed using the epistemological device of the notion of nationality, centred on the need for a clear limitation of the earthly and cultural borders of the Hindu community. The consequence of this description is that non-Hindus, particularly the Muslim minority, are considered to be beyond the scope of this definition of nationality. Therefore, the hegemonic Hindu philosophy, and the culture around it, grows on two main concepts. The first one is, that it stresses the importance of just Hindus as an intrinsic part of India, and secondly, to justify this assurance, it dehumanizes Muslims to such an extent that Hindus create an innate sense of hatred against them, and in demotic consciousness, their picture is established as an intruder. Muslims as being beyond their fold are portrayed as a form of group presence in mainstream culture such as movies and TV soaps (Kumar, 2013).

The Indian film of today, which has undoubtedly emerged as one of the prevailing modes of mainstream culture, has therefore proven to be the perfect medium for this peer rivalry framed by the philosophy of Hindutva. This contrast was portrayed in Indian cinema by rendering the divisions of the Hindu country and the Muslim minority. Therefore, it expressed devotion to the Hindu philosophy, albeit in a subtle way. The approach is in a very apolitical manner. Films hold an incredible talent at combining their tales of politically charged political concerns shrouded in a rightfully non-partisan garb of sheer kitsch. Hindi films have achieved so dexterously by elaborately imposing the ethnic superiority of the majority of the Hindus over the Muslim minority, and by doing so, they have deeply participated in politics (Kumar, 2013).

However, keeping in view all these studies regarding the portrayal of Islamophobia especially in Bollywood movies, we concluded that the image of Islam and Muslims has been represented of a dismal nature. Whereas, we have mentioned earlier in this study, that the evolution of Islamophobia has its roots back in the West. It has been designed and propagated by the west, especially after 9/11, afterwards, it was promoted all around the world. On an academic level, several studies have been devoted to the issue of terrorism in popular culture in general and Hollywood in particular. After 9/11, Kellner has examined several multimedia accounts to investigate the changes caused by the attacks. He focuses especially on the political motivations of cinema and gender changes since the attacks on Twin Towers. While active discussion of media and terrorism is beyond the scope of this work, it would be useful to present a brief summary of the selected research to understand the general trends in media representation (Iwaneki, 2016).

However, Iqbal (2010), in a study on Islamophobia, attempted to unveil the hidden aspects of the phenomenon and to trace its origins, setting it in its historical context. Whereas, he critically analyzed its various definitions and observed the way it has been measured as a social and/or a media construct. Moreover, it addressed some of the issues related to Islamophobia that have not been adequately investigated in previous studies. However, the study also presented a process model to explain the development of Islamophobia with a clearer identification of the variables involved.

Zafar and Amjad (2015) informed how Muslims were portrayed in Bollywood films from 2009 to 2013, with a particular emphasis on how Muslims have been portrayed negatively since 9/11. Bollywood films have been depicted as being untrustworthy, unfriendly, nasty, evil, terrorist, and

anti-national. The film industry has grown significantly over the past ten years, with popular superstars—mostly Muslims—cast in films that are hostile to Islam. The study methodically examines how and to what degree Bollywood represents Muslims. Ninety Muslim characters were chosen from ten Bollywood films based on content analysis, and eleven categories were created to support the claim. The finding shows that 24.66% of Muslim characters portrayed are favourable, 31.81% are neutral, and 43.23% are adverse. Positive Muslim personalities are always modern, while negative Muslim characters alternate between conservatism and modernity. The findings show that Bollywood has a plan to portray Muslims and Islam both in India and around the world. Therefore, keeping in view the findings of the previous research it is pertinent to explore how the Bollywood movies portray Islam and Muslims during the era of Narendra Modi (2019-2022).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Framing Theory

The concept of framing was initially put forth by Gregory Bateson in 1972. According to Nyberg (1973) psychological frames are a "spatial and temporary bounding of set of interactive messages" and are a form of Meta-communication. According to Arowolo (2017) framing is the practice of presenting news items and archive content in a recognized context. The agenda has a long history of being determined through framing, and it further broadens the subject matter of the research instead of focusing it on a single topic. The central principle of framing theory holds that the media highlights some events before contextualizing them. According to framing theory, the media introduces news items with a defined and constrained contextualization before developing the frame. Frames can be used to increase comprehension. It is predicated on the idea that how a subject is covered in newscasts can influence how viewers interpret it. Framing frequently involves social and psychological underpinnings (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Raphael, 2006).

The idea of framing theory is fundamental in determining how details are communicated to the general population. It entails broadening the field of study beyond a specific issue as well as determining the agenda. Fundamentally, framing theory asserts that the mainstream media does not merely highlight events; rather, it first calls attention to select incidents before giving them a particular context (Arowolo, 2017). Due to their ability to alter how a topic is perceived, frames are effective tools for improving knowledge. Framing theory contends that the way a story is presented in newscasts can have a big impact on how viewers perceive and comprehend it. This theory explains how the media presents information in certain ways to influence public perceptions and opinions. Goffman used the example of a picture frame to describe the concept of a frame. He said that framing functions in the same manner that someone uses an object (a frame) to display his photograph. The outside structure serves as the "frame," while the image serves as a depiction of the "content" of the person's life. They plan their life's social interactions together (Treviño, 2003).

Keeping in view the relevance we have employed the theoretical underpinnings provided by the framing theory to explore and analyze the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the selected Bollywood movies during the period under study.

3.2. Research Methodology

3.2.1. Data Collection

One of the most important aspects of conducting scientific research is data collection. It is the process of gathering important information and data from all relevant sources to address the relevant research topic. This information is important to the study as a whole as it is used to test hypotheses and evaluate key findings and their interpretation. These methods are divided into two

additional groups: primary data collection, which is done at the beginning, and secondary data collection, which is done at a higher level and analyzed in depth (Taherdoost, 2021).

The data has been collected from Bollywood movies propagating this image, released from (2019-2022). Although, Bollywood has its rich inheritance in propagating hatred and negative image of Islam and Muslims for decades, during the Modi era this propagation has gained considerable impetus. The data from the movie has been compiled and grouped into subsequent themes for analysis. The justification for using this research methodology is given below.

In scientific research, it is very important to accurately identify the specific groups, phenomena, elements, objects, variables or components observed and studied. The number of people or subjects selected for the study is referred to as the population (Majid, 2018). The population of this study comprise the top three Bollywood movies produced and released in between 2019 and 2022. These films have been analyzed to understand how they portray the images of Islam and Muslims during the Era of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, which has been marked by various socio-political changes and events. This study analyzed how Bollywood movies, as a major cultural influencer, have represented Islam and Muslims during Modi's Era.

The method used in this study to select a sample was non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is commonly used in population research and is carried out using estimation techniques. In general, non-probability sampling is useful in exploratory research such as a pilot study (survey conducted on a sample that is smaller than a predetermined sample size). When it is not possible to draw a random sample for an experiment due to time or financial constraints, this is used (Sharma, 2017). Purposive sampling is often used to base the facts on and select cases that have a large amount of information relevant to the award portion of the subject analysis. Given the existence of many widely accepted test methods. It seems that standard testing is used in most applications. This study used purposive sampling in which the researcher selected people to determine the best answer to the questions proposed by the domain experts (Marshall, 1996). It is one of the most popular and widely used sampling methods in both qualitative and quantitative research. The purpose of this study is to collect as much data as possible for meta-analysis, that is, to identify the most accurate respondents possible.

The use of the purposive sampling technique is based on the selective movies that are highly relevant, representative, and contextually significant and achieved research objective. This technique aligned with the study goal of comprehensively analysing the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Bollywood movies during a specific political period of Modi's era.

3.3.Data Analysis; Content Analysis

We have employed content analysis as a tool to explore and analyze the content of selected Bollywood films to determine the portrayal of Islam and Muslims. This study focused on four different content categories. These categories include; "Profession", "Ethnicity", "Language" and "Clothes/Symbols" associated with Islam and Muslims in the movies. These classifications served as a methodological basis for the collection and study of film data. Each Muslim character portrayed in the selected Bollywood films was used as a "unit of analysis" to conduct a content analysis.

A code sheet was developed to evaluate the character of Muslims portrayed in the movies. This code sheet contained various areas such as their appearance (Clothes/Signs), the way they speak and present themselves (language, body language), the level of patriotism, and the profession chosen in the story. Moreover, three slants are also included in the coding sheet, each category also helped to analyze the portrayal of Muslim characters based on whether they were portrayed in a positive, negative, or neutral way.

In this study by ‘Bollywood’ we mean a film industry based in Mumbai, engaged in the production of motion pictures in Hindi languages (Sen, 2022). And, by ‘Modi Era’ we mean the time frame of 2019 to 2022 when Mr Narendra Modi performed the role of Prime Minister of India. In the Modi era, Islamophobia has become a norm and not a fringe occurrence. Of course, since Modi became prime minister in 2014, Islamophobia has become a matter of his state policy. However, from the second term (2019) his policy became more aggressive and anti-Muslim, which is evident from the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A (special status of Jammu and Kashmir), CAA and especially the portrayal of Islamophobia in Bollywood movies (Sen, 2022).

3.4. Content Categorization of Themes

Following is the coding sheet designed for the variables and rules defined.

Variables	Categories	Rules
Movies	Kashmir files, Tanhaji, Panipat and Sooryavanshi	Scenes extracted from relevant topic (Targeted Sampling)
Key Themes	portrayal of Indian Muslims, Indians in Muslim Character, Pakistani Muslims, Representation of National Islam, Foreign Islam	Topics are identified from the text that supports the determined themes
Topics covered in the content	Languages, Body language Dressing/getup, Religious practices Profession	Measured by the intensity of the content

4. Findings and Analysis

The main objective of the study was to examine, how the image of Muslims and Islam was portrayed in Bollywood films from 2019 to 2022, i.e. in the Modi era. To this end, we developed focused research questions that guided our study. By prudently analyzing specific films, this study entirely justified the research questions. The results of this analysis are presented in the coming pages. This section provides an overview of the technique used for the study as well as this research design. Data obtained from movies to achieve the target of this study. This section also included a content analysis of the study findings, discussions, recommendations for future research, and a review of the study's limitations. The data has been analyzed through content analysis. Through analysis, this study tried to find out more about how movie representation effect on society as a whole.

4.1. Findings of the Quantitative Content Analysis

Table 1 Representation of Muslim Characters in Movies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tanhaji	5	12.2	12.2	12.2
	Sooryavanshi	9	22.0	22.0	34.1
	The Kashmir Files	5	12.2	12.2	46.3
	Panipat	22	53.7	53.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

As mentioned above **Table 1 Representation of Muslim Characters in Movies**. In the movie “Tanhaji” 12.2% of the characters are portrayed as Muslims, offering a glimpse into their presence

within the film's narrative. In "Sooryavanshi" 22.2% of the characters are depicted as Muslims, underlining their significance in their storyline. In the "Kashmir Films," 12.2% of Muslim characters highlighted their role. While in "Panipat" notably features a higher proportion of 53.7% of its characters belonging to the Muslim community, indicating a significant focus on their roles and contributions within the movie.

Table 2 Direction of the Representation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	28	68.3	68.3	68.3
	Positive	11	26.8	26.8	95.1
	Neutral	2	4.9	4.9	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

As mentioned above **Table 2 Direction of the Representation** In these movies, Muslim characters are predominantly portrayed in a negative light, accounting for a substantial 68.3% of their representation. Conversely, 26.8% of the Muslim characters are depicted positively while 4.9% remain neutral represented within the narratives. This distribution reflects the various perspectives and roles assigned to Muslim characters in these films.

Table 3 Overall Representation-Cross Tabulation

			Representation			Total
			Negative	Positive	Neutral	
Movies	Tanhaji	Count	5	0	0	5
		% of Total	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%	12.2%
	Sooryavanshi	Count	6	3	0	9
		% of Total	14.6%	7.3%	0.0%	22.0%
	The Kashmir Files	Count	5	0	0	5
		% of Total	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%	12.2%
	Panipat	Count	12	8	2	22
		% of Total	29.3%	19.5%	4.9%	53.7%
Total		Count	28	11	2	41
		% of Total	68.3%	26.8%	4.9%	100.0%

Table 3 Overall Representation-Cross Tabulation shows in the movie, "Tanhaji", 12.2% of the Muslim characters are portrayed negatively means they are shown as antagonists. However, there are no Muslim characters presented in a positive or neutral with in the film. In "Sooryavanshi" 14.6% of Muslim characters are depicted negatively. On the other hand, 7.3% of Muslim characters are portrayed positively, playing roles that are heroic or commendable. None of the Muslim characters in this movie are shown neutrally. "The Kashmir Files" follows a similar pattern to "Tanhaji" with 12.2% of Muslim characters being portrayed negatively and in neutral roles. In the movie "Panipat" a significant 29.3% of Muslim characters are depicted negatively playing antagonist or adverse roles. In contrast, 19.5% of Muslim characters are portrayed positively or in

favourable roles, and 4.9% of Muslim characters are shown neutrally. These statistics highlight the diverse portrayals of Muslim characters across these films portrayed negatively and others negatively.

This study examined the portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood movies during the Modi Era. The research comprised qualitative and quantitative data to highlight the representation of Muslims. The study revolved around key questions; How did Bollywood movies represent Islam and Muslims during the Modi Era (2019- 2022)? The representation of Muslim language, religious practices, professions dressing, and dialect revolved around themes in movies such as “Tanhaji”, Sooryvanshi”, The Kashmir Files” and “Panipat”. This chapter contains an analysis of the nuanced and multifaceted depiction of Muslims in Bollywood cinema during this specific timeframe. During the Modi Era (2019-2022) Bollywood movies have displayed a notable presence of Muslim characters. The data reveals that Muslim characters are predominantly portrayed in a negative light which was 68.3% of their representation 26.8% are depicted as positive and 4.9% remain neutral. The data illustrates that the representation of Muslims in these movies varies with Panipat featuring the highest proportion which is 53.7% indicating a significant focus on their roles and contributions within the movie. This indicates that Bollywood during this period has incorporated a diverse range of Muslim characters, reflecting the industry’s inclusivity. Dwyer (2006) stated that Indian cinema has a sub-genre of films called Islamic films. In these movies, Muslims and their social and cultural lives are portrayed in a complex way but Hindus are shown more grand, positive, and prominent manner.

4.2.Findings of the Qualitative Content Analysis

4.2.1. *Tanhaji*

After a qualitative content analysis of the Muslim characters portrayed in Bollywood films, it was discovered that the representation of Islam and Muslims is more negatively portrayed than positively or neutrally. The movie “Tanhaji” shows the backdrop of the 17th century Indian struggle for freedom. The movie contributed to the broader discussion about how Bollywood movies represent Islam and Muslims, particularly in Modi’s Era. It emphasized the differences between the two groups. The movie tells the story of the conflict between the Mughal Sultan’s expansionist ambitions and the valiant soldiers of Shivaji the King. The movie plot revealed a deliberate use of these themes to symbolize the Hindu and Muslim communities. Tanhaji and his associates are portrayed as Hindu characters, dressed in white attire while Udybhan are depicted as a bad character. He treated captivated very harshly, locking them in cages, using arrows to hurt them pouring hot water on them, and tying clothes around their mouths and chains around their feet. He represented with beards and put Mughal soldiers’ uniforms and sends them to fight against Tanhaji signifying their Muslim identity. He represented extremely violent, cruel and lustful and didn’t seem to have any goodness in him. The stark contrast in appearance and lightening reinforces the duality of goodness and evil in the movie.

The movie Tanhaji shows the era of Alamgir, Alamgir is shown as a Muslim negativity, his dress and posture are very clear, he has a long beard and black eyes, and he is shown as cruel and dreams of conquering the whole of India, while on the other hand, he takes a Hindu with him and he fights against the Marathas along with the rest of the Muslims. His dress is also similar to that of Alamgir, his dress is shown in *Shalwar Kameez* and turban, and he is clearly shown as a tyrant, while only in his army are some Muslims who are Positively shown In this film, mostly the ups and downs are shown, how the Hindus of India stand against the universalist, and along with them, the local Muslims are also shown not with the universalist, but He is with the Marathas and then it is also shown that some of the local Muslims who are portrayed as Rajputs agree with the Marathas that

they will not fight if the film is seen in this context. How to show Muslims from outside India coming and going and showing their atrocities.

4.2.2. Panipat

In another Bollywood movie, “Panipat” where Muslims are often portrayed with stereotypes. The Maratha Empire is portrayed as a Hindu Empire that protected India from foreign invasions. The movie’s Muslim characters are presented as violent and intolerable. They are given Arabic names, shown wearing traditional attire, with long beards, and practising conservative Islamic customs like using Surma and displaying certain mannerisms. This depiction contrasts with how more westernized and progressive Hindus are depicted, presenting them as secular individuals whose actions differ from those associated with strict Hindu practices. The film implies that Hindus specifically Marathas are portrayed as beautiful making their character more likeable while Muslim characters such as Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali, Siraj-ud-Daulah of Awadh and Najib-ud-Daulah are depicted less favourably. According to Hamayun Khan (2019), critics in Afghanistan argue that the movie distorts history and affects the trust between India and Afghanistan. The portrayal of Abdali is historically inaccurate and this movie exaggerates his negative qualities. The film demonizes Muslims and promotes Islamophobia. The data revealed that Muslim characters are often engaging in harmful actions which create a negative impact on society. The portrayal of their religious practices is often inaccurate and misused by Bollywood.

4.2.3. Sooryvanshi

In Sooryvanshi movie depicted a complex portrayal of Muslims where they are often categorized into good or bad people based on their actions and allegiance to India. While there were attempts to explore nuanced aspects of the conflict, the film frequently resorted to simplified stereotypes, portraying Muslims as entirely good or evil. This representation reduced the complexity of Muslim identity, denying them of their humanity by defining them solely based on their actions. The movie simplified a community by presenting a black-and-white view of Muslims as either “Kasb” (negative character). This portrayal contributed to the perpetuation of stereotypes and oversimplification of Muslim identity in Bollywood. The characters represented as positive were often those aligned with the police of Hindus and conformed to stereotypical roles while negative were depicted as traditional religious teachers and terrorists. This portrayal suggested that Muslims were only deemed non-threatening when they aligned with certain preconceived notions. This movie raised linguistic and cultural issues as characters from different backgrounds spoke only Urdu contributing to a single; somewhat distorted image.

As far as the dress of the Muslims is concerned, the Muslims who are portrayed negatively in this film are shown in the same old style, such as a hat, beard, and black eyes, and they practice their religion like a Muslim who is living as a Hindu also prays in secret.

4.2.4. Kashmir Files

The film portrays the Muslims of Kashmir in a negative light and shows how the Hindu Pandits endure atrocities and how their lives are threatened and this threat increases to such an extent that even the rest of the Hindus do not support them. And how they get out of that place with their own help. This whole incident has been filmed in such a way that after watching it, a certain kind of hatred develops against the Muslims and this is the purpose of the film to show How to incite hatred against Muslims and Islam After coming to power, BJP seems to be starting this propaganda on how to win elections by inciting hatred against Muslims or to promote Hindu ideology.

In all the mentioned movies, common elements are observed. This includes the Hindu presented as a sober and positive character while the Muslim character represented with specific clothing styles, harsh language tone and intolerant body language and method of depicting Muslim

characters as negative, dangerous, ill-mannered and involved in distorted or exaggerated behaviours. The depiction of Muslims and their customs in Indian films has been distorted, leading to an identity crisis for Muslims. They also falsified the documented historical facts. They label Muslims as violent, fundamentalist, radical, gangster, hateful, uncivilized, terrorist and economically underdeveloped. A recurring pattern in these movies involves anti-hero characters associated with Muslim rulers using deceit to achieve their objectives. They not only seek to control India but also want to dominate the Indian Motherland, this reputation of these themes stir up negative impact and hatred against Muslims.

5. Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to explore and analyze the representation of Islam and Muslims in the selected Bollywood movies. The researchers employed content analysis quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings have been seen through the theoretical underpinnings provided by the framing theory. Framing theory helped in this study to identify recurring frames in the portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood movies. It allowed for the categorization of frames such as “Antagonistic Muslim”, “Stereotype Religious Practices”, and cruel behaviour of Muslims. The theory aided in analyzing the movies. This study explored how specific frames were constructed and reinforced through elements like character appearance, language, religious symbols, professions and dialect. The theory enabled the study to contextualize the representation of Muslims within the specific political and social context of The Modi Era. This contextualization helped in understanding how these frames related to broader societal discourses and political narratives. The study also employed framing theory to investigate how these film portrayals have impacted public perception and attitudes towards Muslims. It offered a lens through which to examine how repeated frames could potentially shape audience opinions.

The theory also facilitated the analysis of how different frames were used to depict Muslims based on their perceived National and Foreign Muslim identity. The theory was instrumental in critiquing stereotypical representations of Muslims such as portraying them as positive, negative and neutral which oversimplified complex identities.

The analysis of Bollywood movies produced during the Modi Era from 2019-2022 reveals prominent trends in the representation of Islam and Muslims in these movies. Muslim characters are portrayed negatively more than twice as often as they are positive. Bollywood portrays Muslim characters negatively in the community. The finding shows that Indian movies representing Muslim characters served as harmful and dangerous for society. Stereotyping plays a pervasive role in these cinematic portrayals with Muslim characters often being depicted through clichéd images such as traditional attire, and long beards, and their behaviour is still shown as harsh, cruel, and violent. A recurrent theme in these films is the depiction of Muslims as antagonistic or villains aligning them with negative actions which inadvertently reinforce biases and prejudices against the Muslim community. The framing of these narratives simplifies the complexities of Muslim identities. These four movies is the misrepresentation and misuse of Islamic religious practices often involving harmful and dangerous activities. This portrayal fosters a negative perception of Islam, leading to a misalignment in religious practices and reality.

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