



## REVIEW OF RESEARCH



### A STUDY OF MUSLIM POPULATION ISSUE COVERAGE IN INDIAN NEWSPAPERS

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#### ABSTRACT

*It has been predominantly marked that mainstream media have been failure to become voice weaker, downtrodden and marginalized section of our society. The same thing also has been observed in the Indian Muslim context. The latest religion-based population census 2011, was made a point of controversy only to mislead the masses with distorted facts by the Indian mainstream media. Instantly, it came into the national discourse that how fast Muslim population is increasing in Indiabut such manufactured reports are far from reality. It is unfortunate that Indian Muslims have to face a hostile and discriminatory attitude towards them on a daily basis where they find themselves in a baffling situation. Hence, this present research paper is an attempt to find-out how mainstream media portray Muslim population issue before the society and what might be the reason to depiction Muslims and their issues negatively.*



**KEY WORDS:** Media Accountability, Media Coverage, Minority Stereotypes, Muslim's Population.

#### INTRODUCTION:

With the release of the Census 2011 data on religion, the growth of the Muslim population has become the focus of the debate once again. Mainstream media published and aired misleading and misguided media reports on the differentials in population growth by religion in reference to Census 2011. First time, Indian government released the census data before public on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015. In spite of that different mainstream media breaks the story more early, such as before the 2014 general election there was a story in 'Open Magazine' with headline of 'The untold story of census. The story states rise-up of Muslim population in India. Another religious census story published before the 2015 Delhi assembly election, news was published by the byline of Bharti Jain, reporter of The Times of India. Very next day the leading News agency of India Press Trust of India (PTI) released the census story, after that it became public. Now it's important to understand the politics of religion based census. When first time the religion census story came into limelight, that time UPA government was at the center, due to upcoming general election it did not release the census data but when NDA government came into power in May 2014, it released religion census data just one week before the Bihar Assembly election. So, now we can observe how central government used the census data for their vested interest.

In present scenario mass media emerged as new paradigm of social and political power. It controls all form of human activities and life, without it we can't imagine our daily life. According to Noam Chomsky 'There's plenty to criticize about the mass media, but they are the only source of regular information about a

wide range of topics. Hence, at this juncture it is also import to examine the role of media towards society because it is the only tool that duty is to make bridge between the policy maker and citizens. If media fails to perform their duty with accountability the bridge between policy makers and citizen will collapse. Hence, it is important to evaluate the mediarole plays from time to time and encourage them to do their duties for the welfare of the society. Keeping these things in mind the researcher is trying to investigate how media portray Muslim's population issues in their platform and or has it failed to cover this issue with accountability? These are the few important points which lead to this study.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Shailesh, Varun (2015) studied the issue of Muslim's population on their research paper namely 'आबादी पर मीडिया का दृष्टिकोण' (Media's viewpoints on religion) and tried to examine this issue analytically. In this paper Varun tried to touch all dimensions which are almost associated with it. First, he discussed historically aspects of Indian's population and tried to investigate its relation with communalism and came to conclusion that there is as petty politics behind this issue, that's why this issue is still surviving.

Shailesh & Badauliya (2015) in their research paper entitled 'मीडिया में मुस्लिम आबादी' (Muslim's population in Media) tried to find out how mainstream media portray this issue in their platforms especially in Indian newspapers. Researchers analytically studied the newspaper and tried to observe their role on this issue minutely and reveals how they performed their duties. Researcher stated in their paper that it seems newspapers are now mouthpiece of any political party and they fail in their duties towards society and working as propagandist which is harmful for society.

In an entitle with 'इस्लाम, मुसलमान और परिवार नियोजन' (Islam, Musalaman and Faimily planning) Quraishi (2003) tried to critically analyze Indian Muslim society and tried to see it in reference to Islamic sharia. Quraishi comparatively analyzed the state wise population on their paper and made remarks why in some state Muslim population is increasing. One important remark was the education level; Quraishi stated education is the key to cope with all social problems and also through his writing Quraishi underlined some Islamic values which tell about family planning and responsibility of peoples towards society.

Priyadarshi (2017) through his writing 'ब्लॉग: किस हिसाब से मुसलमान हिंदुओं से अधिक होंगे?' states about the petty politics behind the population issue. He writes, if we see Census 2011 with independent mind then we can broadly see the population of Hindus are not decreasing but other religion from India's their populations are comparatively decreasing, he provided many facts in his story and finally he underlined the cheap and irresponsible politics behind it.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To find-out how newspapers portray Muslim population issues in the society.
- To analyse newspapers and how they depict 2011 religion census data before readers.

### Growth of Hindus and Muslims population in numbers

**Table-1 Decadal growth of Hindu' population**

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Hindu' Population (in crore)	30.35	36.65	45.33	56.24	69.01	82.76	96.62
Growth rate (in percent)	--	20.76	23.68	24.07	22.71	19.92	16.76

Source- (शैलेश, आबादीपर मीडिया का दृष्टिकोण, 2015)

**Table-2 Decadal growth of Muslim' population**

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Muslim' Population	3.54	4.69	6.14	8.13	10.67	13.82	17.22
Growth rate (in percent)	--	32.49	30.92	30.78	32.88	29.52	24.60

Source- (शैलेश, आबादीपर मीडिया का दृष्टिकोण, 2015)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The proposed study is based on qualitative and quantitative method. The data have been collected through a structured code sheet and the study is a part of unobtrusive research. The Content analysis method is being used for this study. The researcher analyzed the content of newspapers with regard to how Muslim population issue in Indian mainstream print media is being portrayed and for this, New Delhi based most prominent newspapers have been identified for the study.

### Facts and Findings-1

#### Packaging of religion-based census news stories in leading newspapers, dated- Aug 26, 2015

Newspapers	Language	News Placement	Column	News Source	News Continue	Photo/ Graphics
Hindustan	Hindi	Lead Upper	Eight	Special Correspondent	Yes	Yes
Jansatta	Hindi	Upper	Five	Bhasha (News Agency)	Yes	Yes
Amar Ujala	Hindi	Upper	Five	Amar Ujala Beuro	Yes	Yes
Dainik Bhaskar	Hindi	Lead, Upper	Five	Bhaskar News/ New Delhi	NO	Yes
Dainik Jagran	Hindi	Upper, Lead	Four	Jagran Beuro/ New Delhi	Yes	Yes
Navodaya Times	Hindi	Upper	Five	Beuro	Yes	Yes
Deshbandhu	Hindi	Upper	Two	News Agency	No	Yes
Prabhat Khabar	Hindi	Upper	Five	News Agency/ New Delhi	No	Yes
The Times of India	English	Upper/ Lead	Four	Correspondent	Yes	Yes
The Indian Express	English	Bottom	Eight	Correspondent	No	Yes
Hindustan Times	English	Upper/ Lead	Four	Correspondent	Yes	Yes

### Facts & Findings- 2

#### Portrayal of Muslims population stories in leading newspapers

**Newspaper:** Dainik Bhaskar (Hindi), **Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** 'Muslims increased 0.8% in population, Hindus' decreased by 0.7%' (आबादी में मुस्लिमों की हिस्सेदारी 0.8% बढ़ी, हिन्दुओं की 0.7% घटी)

**Analysis of News Content:** News starts with the highlighting the point 2001 to 2011 decadal growth of Indian religion population, in which story tells the share of Muslim population rise-up with 0.8% and share of Hindu population goes down 0.7%. Further it says, according to 2011 religion census data the actual population of Indian is 121 crore approximately, in which 96.63 crore are Hindus and 17.22 crore population are Muslims. The report was published when Bihar assembly election was to start soon. In next to paragraph, the news story also highlighting population in New Delhi. It also stated that the Hindu constituted 1 crore 37 lakh of population, is the first on row and second is Muslims, third and fourth are Sikh and Jains respectively. The source of this news is its own news desk (Bhaskar News). Four tables and two graphics are used to highlight the key points. It used historical factual data to present story in an interesting way continued it to the next page.

**Newspaper:** Dainik Jagran (Hindi)

**Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** बढ़ी मुस्लिम हिस्सेदारी (Muslim population increased)

**Sub Heading:** सरकारने जारी किए 2011 की जनगणना के धार्मिक आंकड़े

(Government released religion census 2011 data)

**Analysis of News Content:** During the last decade the growth rate of Muslim populations increased eight percent, in contrary Hindu population decadal growth rate with one percent went down. The next paragraph of this news story highlighting the point that Muslim is the only religious minority group whose population is got increased during 2001-2011. After examining this story, we came to the point that the whole story was around Muslim population increasing, and population of Hindus decreasing. The source of this news story is its news bureau, New Delhi. The news story consisting of two tables respectively and news is continuing to next page.

**Newspaper:** Hindustan (Hindi)

**Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** मुस्लिम आबादी सबसे तेजबढ़ी (Muslims population increased the fastest)

**Analysis of News Content:** News story starts with highlighting the population fact i.e. 'except Muslims all religion population has decreased last decade'. The share of Hindu population went down 0.7% and Muslim population rose-up 0.8%. It is lead story of the day and taking all eight columns upper page. It used one photographs which depicts Muslim identity and on graph to highlight the main points. The source of this news is its own special correspondent and new is continuing to next page. It was highlighted during the upcoming Bihar assembly poll to affect 50 out of 243 constituencies directly.

**Newspaper:** The Times of India (English)

**Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** Muslim Share of population up 0.8%, Hindus' down 0.7%

**Analysis of News Content:** The news story states in TOI that 'The share of Hindus in India's population came down from 80.5% in 2001 to 79.8% in 2011, while the share of Muslims rose from 13.4% to 14.2% according to latest religion based census. The next paragraph of this news story also discussed the increasing Muslims population in Assam state. It pointed-out share of Muslims in the total population has increased from 30.9% in 2009 to 34.2 % in 2011, according to news story the main reason of increasing in Muslims population is Bangladeshi migration. It further stated that in Assam 9 out of the 27 district is Muslim dominated as compared to 6 of the 27 in 2001. The story also stated that minorities live more in cities than villages. The story consists with a fine data graph, which represent all factual details. The source of this story is TOI own reporter and this news story is in continuing to next page.

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**Newspaper:** Hindustan Times (English)

**Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** Hindu proportion of India's population less than 80%

**Sub Heading:** CENSUS REVELATIONS Decadal growth rate of Muslims slowing down

**Analysis of News Content:** The share of Hindus in India's total population has shown marginal decline between 2001 and 2011, while Muslims increased slightly in this period. Hindus now make up 79.8% of India, a slight decline of 0.7%, while Muslims the largest minority makes up 14.2% of the country up 0.8% points. It also pointed out that growth to Muslims in 2001 to 2011 has declined. Further stated in this story is 'the religion based data ready to release in January 2014 but the then UPA government chose not to make it public due to ahead of the general election that year. But one week before crucial the Bihar assembly election currently NDA government decided to make it public. The source of this news story is HT Correspondent and story is consisting with two tables of data. The news story is in continuing to next page.

**Newspaper:** The Indian Express

**Date:** Aug 26, 2015

**News Headline:** Hindu dip to below 80% of population; Muslims share up, slow down

**Analysis of News Content:** Interestingly in the 'The Indian Express' newspaper the story related to religion based census data got placed in bottom of the first page. In spite of that all five newspaper discussed earlier, they provided upper space of their first page. The story also starts with highlighting the Muslims population and comparing with other religion. In this news story one table is published, which highlights decadal growth of Muslims in the different states of the country. No photograph is used in this news and story is not continued to next page. In byline, three names are mentioned as a source of news.

## DISCUSSION & SUGGESTIONS

Mass media is regarded as watch dog of our society but nowadays the nature of media is becoming more irresponsible. Mass media was developed as a means of social responsibility but now it is observed that mostly media are becoming part of power and government which is against its nature. In these days, it is difficult to find the difference between the journalist and party volunteer. Journalist accountability and impartiality is back bone of journalism. If it became biased, prejudiced and unethical then it would be harm for journalism and also for society. It is also observed that now most of Newspapers, TV channels and other mass media channel became a mouthpiece of few political parties. They only made news of their policy and interest; therefore they have to neglect positive stories which are important for an individual.

In today's scenario there is no accountability of such media entities. Now, responsibility of audience and reader becomes more important. If they would not boycott and oppose the content of these media tools, it would be harmful for society. Hence, as a responsible citizen they will have to also perform their duties also. There are various such platform available in our society, where we can raise our voice against this baffling situation such as we may write application to 'Letter to Editor', 'Letter to press association', 'Letter to journalist association', Press council of India', National broadcasting Association and these platforms certainly will be helpful to cope this situation only if we perform our duties with accountability too.

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