

The Role of Print Media in Building a Democratic Society

A Case Study of the News Coverage of Burhan Wani Killing in Kashmir

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Abstract

In a democracy, news media are crucial in informing the public and moulding public discourse. Society and media share an obligate symbiosis. While media are expected to serve democracy and strengthen it, the society nurtures and protects the media by according special privileges to it.

Kashmir, in the northern most part of India, is a politically contested site. Both, Pakistan and India, have been accusing each other for creating unrest in the Kashmir Valley and inflaming violence. During the 1980s, political events in Kashmir led to an armed mass movement making way for the Indian Government's intervention, thus weakening the local administration. News media have been accused of disseminating only the governments' sides of the story, fanning violence in the Valley.

The last three years have witnessed more violence and blood-letting than before. The 22-year old Burhan Wani's killing on 08 July 2016, was a well-publicised event. Following the killing, Kashmir was placed under 99 consecutive days of curfew. Fierce debates and protests followed in Indian public spheres and widespread violent protests were witnessed in and outside Kashmir, and an estimated 85 people have died in the state.

Within an Agenda Setting Theory framework, this paper examined the role of newspapers in informing citizens about the killing of Burhan Wani. The study employed a mixed, multi-level content analysis to examine the content concerning the issue as published by India's two leading English newspapers - *The Times of India* and *The Hindu*.

Keywords

Burhan Wani, The Hindu, The Times of India, Kashmir, Democracy, News Media and Social Responsibility

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Introduction

News media play an important role in any democracy. They are key players in informing the public, moulding public opinion, and guide public discourse. Journalists are expected to fulfil critical functions of informing and educating the public, and make them aware of the functioning of the agents of democracy and world around. This is associated with media's social responsibility towards a democracy (Ahmad & Bakshi, 2014). Much responsibility is vested in the media for the success of a democracy in any civilised society, and in turn, the media in a democratic set-up are treated with special consideration.

The media and society or democracy share an obligate symbiosis. While media are expected to serve democracy and strengthen it, the state treats them with special privileges and protections. Rightly then, Edmond Burke, coining the term 'fourth estate' recognised the special role media have in the formation and success of a society (Dutta, 2011). The fourth estate refers to the power news media wield in a society, just as other three estates -clergy, nobility, and commoners- do. News media's this power comes from the fact that people can critique a society and government's behaviour, actions, and policies using a media platform. Hence, Mueller (cit. in Whitten-Woodring & a Van Belle, 2014: 5) goes to the extent of saying that freedom of the press (as an extension of freedom of expression) is more important to democracy than people's right to vote, since "citizens have the right to complain, to petition, to organize, to protest, to demonstrate, to strike, to threaten to emigrate, to shout, to publish. "Therefore, special privileges accorded to media look reasonable and essential for the success of a democracy.

India, the largest democracy in the world, is no exception to this dialectics of democracy and media. Freedom of thought and expression which is enshrined in the Constitution of India, by extension, has been applied to, and protects media and accords them special privileges. Since the beginning of India's struggle for Independence, newspapers have been at the heart of that struggle for self-rule. After India constituted itself as a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic, they are thought to play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between public and the government, and giving voice to citizens, thus nurturing an alert, vibrant, and participative democracy.

In this process of nurturing a democracy, media have received preferential treatment over other agencies, privileges such as source-protection laws for journalists (Bhatia, 2014). and have got away with the minimum punishment or mere admonitions. The numerous cases and disputes the media have engaged in and the respite they have secured from courts of law speaks volumes for this privileged position media occupy in a democracy.

Press Council of India (2010) spells out the social responsibility and roles of media in its charter of conduct for journalists. It mandates that the main objective of the press be to serve the public by providing accurate news, opinions and comments and views on various matters of public interest. The Council expects journalists to be fair, unbiased and objective in reporting, and employ a language that is easily understood by common people.

When, in a democracy, an agency is given preferential treatment, it is the responsibility of the informed citizens to question if the role played by the agencies under consideration are proportionate to the privileges accorded them. For example, how have the media fulfilled their watch dog function in relation to the benefits enjoyed? Have they been fair and responsible in carrying out their functions as informers and educators? To test their fidelities to a democracy and people, the media's role needs to be scrutinised in extreme and conflicting situations. Kashmir, in northern most part of India, has been a conflict zone for the past three decades. Hence, in a democratic context of media set up, covering Kashmir

conflict becomes a litmus test for the media to understand their role in building and nurturing democracy.

The current study attempts to examine the English newspapers' role in the coverage of the Burhan Wani killing. While there is significant research literature on covering conflict and disputed territories, there is not much literature from an Indian media experience. Burhan Wani's killing being the latest on Indian consciousness, it opens avenues for media researchers to examine this episode from a newspaper point-of-view. Hence, it is expected that this media analysis of the Indian politico-national experience will address this gap in some way.

Review of Literature

News media, for most people, are the primary or the only sources of information in knowing the external world, and especially in penetrating zones of conflict, for news updates. While for 62% Americans social media is the major source of news (Pew Research Center, 2016), that news itself is fed to social media by legacy media. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2015) provides statistical support to the fact that TV, Newspapers, and Radio are the main sources of information. And in developing countries like India, the reliance on legacy media is felt much more. Gadda (2014) reinforces the notion that media are the only source of information, for most people in India and outside, to learn about the Kashmir conflict. He implies that the media being the major or only sources information and opinion formation about Kashmir, can lead reader thinking along their news narratives.

Media Agenda

While choosing news, media organisations select and eliminate news based on what, how much, and how they think should the public know. This process of selection, processing, and presentation of news falls within the theoretical frameworks of agenda setting and framing by media, who decide the *whats* and *hows* of a particular issue. When the news is disseminated, consumers don't just know that particular issue, but also are made to think about it, and how important or not it is to consider that issue over the some others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This prioritization of the news stories by news organisations is known as the 'agenda setting process'.

According to Dearing and Rogers (1996), agenda setting process explains why particular information is chosen to be conveyed to the people in a democracy over some other. The disseminated information shapes the public's opinion about the issue. Hence, agenda setting in the 'public sphere' (Habermas, 2014) is a political process. It is a prevailing competition between the proponents of any given issue who strive hard to draw the public's attention towards the issue (Dearing & Rogers, 2016).

Agenda being a bipolar issue, it functions to polarise the public. McCombs and Shaw's (1972) seminal research into agenda setting functions of media has shed light on the three-fold agenda - policy, public, and media- of media, each with conflicting sides to it.

It is not just the issues that are highlighted by media that draw the public attention, but media / newspapers' organisations also shape the political reality, thus becoming -for consumers- the trusted information sources of an issue and ordering and prioritising them. Consequently, the media set the agenda for the public discourse.

Research into American electoral politics has shown that agenda setting could affect public opinion either way (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010). Hyun & Moon (2016) suggest that in

electoral politics, a news source consistently highlighting certain attributes of a candidate against the negatives of the rivals could strengthen the public's attitudes.

McCombs & Shaw (1972) have shown that agenda setting can happen at various levels. According to them, framing is the second level of agenda setting which is about setting priorities of various aspects within a particular story.

While agenda setting is understood as suggesting people what to think about, framing, in the words of McCombs and Ghanem (2001) is a 'second order agenda setting'. Framing theory frames subjects it covers. It is the 'how' of the presentation covered, both of which this research employs to examine.

Media and Kashmir

Media's role in a democratic society and public's perception of media has been under scrutiny for a long time. In the Indian political context, it could be gauged in the context of Kashmir ever since the issue drew national attention in 1980s. The government-controlled broadcasters *Doordarshan* (the only TV channel in India till 1991) and All India Radio (the only radio news broadcaster to date) played a major role in reporting the trouble-torn region (Sreedharan, 2009). People in Kashmir hold (state owned) news media responsible for blowing Kashmir out of proportion and providing the central government an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Kashmir, thus weakening the democratically elected regional government. Tavleen Singh (cit. in Gadda, 2014) calls the national press an ally of the then ruling Congress government in Delhi, and holds national press responsible for alienation of Kashmir.

History of Indian press speaks for the travesty of truth in the ecosystem of national media. The imposition of Emergency in 1975, showed how vulnerable the press was under political pressures, and how it could eschew its responsibilities and shy away from fulfilling its role in informing and educating the public without fear and favour of anyone. In this context, Singh (1980) recalls how the national press was used by the erstwhile government to report from a government's perspective, and paint the ruling party in pleasing colours. Commenting on the media's tendency to cave in under pressure and shy away from their responsibility, Kuldip Nayar (2009) cites a senior BJP leader L. K. Advani, who remarked after the Emergency: 'You were asked to bend, but you began to crawl.'

In the recent decades, media have faced not just political pressures, but also have come under the growing influences of advertising and revenue considerations. In a privatised media ecosystem, private ownership of the media controls the news content and the flow of news (Graber, 2003) for various reasons. Thus, in the race to propagate a particular ideology, truth is the first casualty (Gadda, 2014) in news content and the flow of news.

The two major newspapers in Jammu & Kashmir are *Daily Wadi Ki Awaaz* and *Kashmir Observer*. Besides these two, the news about the state is disseminated by other large national newspapers. While the local media have focused on presenting the news from a local point of view, national media have been accused of being partisan in their coverage of Jammu & Kashmir.

In the last three decades, Kashmir has come to occupy an important place in the consciousness of India and Pakistan, because of the turmoil in the Kashmir Valley. The International Crisis Report 2003 states that the Kashmir conflict is the main reason of tension between the two countries (Zia & Syedah, 2015).

Bali (2014) believes that conflict-related news has more 'news value' and it is a major area of operation for media organisations. Such news is of interests to the public as well, for its security implications.

Covering conflict means covering political interests, as well. According to Bali (2014), the behaviour of media in covering conflict is influenced by the parties involved in the conflict. They often use media as a tool to further their respective justifications of the conflict.

A study focused on analysing the role played by national media in reporting strikes in Kashmir Valley from 1989 to 2010 found that the Indian media had failed to highlight the strikes in the Valley either by choosing not to publish news stories about the strikes or by portraying them as "sponsored" programmes of resistance leaders', which had crippled normal life in the Valley; or by not giving much details about the strikes (Gadda, 2014).

Consequently, media have tended to echo the governments' sentiment, and not the ground reality. Joseph notes that Indian media, while covering Kashmir conflict, often tried to reinforce the stance of the Indian government on the Kashmir issue (Zia & Syedah, 2015). In toeing the government line, the media willingly become tools of state propaganda with some pre-set agenda, rather than becoming instruments of democratic discourse.

Method

This research into the highlighting and prioritizing of the killing of Burhan Wani in Kashmir looks into the media coverage by two of India's leading English news dailies - *The Times of India* (TOI) and *The Hindu*. Employing mixed methods, it examines both the substantive and affective aspects of ordering, thus the agenda of the newspapers by the two papers, and how they framed Burhan Wani.

Research Questions:

RQ1: How did Indian newspapers cover Burhan Wani killing?

RQ2: How did Indian newspapers portray Burhan Wani?

A purposive sample of all news stories appearing in *TOI* and *The Hindu* between 08 and 28 July 2016 was used, which constituted three running weeks. The stories were selected based on their continuous appearance after the killing of Burhan Wani. The units of analysis were news stories, headlines, and pictures about the episode, appearing in these two newspapers which consisted a mention of Burhan Wani.

TOI and *The Hindu* were chosen for analysis based on their ranking in circulation during the January - July 2016 period. Among all the newspapers in India, the former occupied the 4th position while the latter 11th position. Hence, their analysis is expected to give an insight into the spectrum of agenda and framing by media.

This research employs Agenda Setting Theory and News Framing Analysis as its framework to examine the newspapers' agenda, and understand how Burhan Wani was framed. The same data was considered from various angles, employing criteria such as frequency of the news story appearance, headlines employed, space allocated in square centimetres, content of the news stories, and visuals used in such stories.

In the first step, a higher frequency means a greater the importance attached by the newspaper.

In the second step, the space given to all stories including text, headlines, and visuals considered. More space would give the journalist more space to write about the subject, and reveal a heightened importance as given by the newspaper.

In the third step, the headlines were grouped under three factors to determine the importance attached: i) Event, ii) Effect, and iii) Response - of various governments to the killing

In the fourth step, content of all the news stories and headlines were subjected to analysis under the identified working categories/ foci, for the priority attached and presentation by newspapers: -

- * Burhan Wani as the primary focus
- * Indian armed forces as the primary focus
- * Victims (including the people affected due to curfew) as the focus
- * Indian Government/ political leaders as the focus, and
- * Others (all those who did not fit into the above categories)

At this stage, the portrayal of Burhan Wani as an individual presented was also examined, to study his media image. The mentions of 'Burhan Wani' or 'Wani' appearing anywhere in the news content were used to examine the tone and context in which the slain man was mentioned. Based on the tone of the mention, the framing categories were broadly worked out as-

i) Positive - content that portrayed Wani as youth hero, idol of youngsters, martyr, or messenger of good; ii) Negative - content that portrayed Burhan Wani as terrorist/ militant who caused trouble to the people and the state, and encouraged violence in the Valley; iii) Neutral - news items which portrayed him neither as positive nor as negative, instead a mention bereft of value judgement. This was done to see what image of Wani did newspapers want their readers to cultivate.

In the fifth (visual analysis) stage, pictures published by these two papers were examined to understand the newspapers' visual portrayal of Burhan Wani. The researchers employed visual framing analysis to study the published photographs: did they convey the same agenda of the newspapers as the text or did they digress from their textual agenda? For this, three photojournalistic tools were used-

i) Composition - what/who were the visual elements included within the frame; ii) Technical tools- types of camera shots and angles employed; iii) Captions - outlines or text used by the papers to describe/ explain the visual elements

The criteria employed for this classify pictures were-

- i) Burhan Wani - images that framed Burhan Wani in them or procession of his funeral/ posters etc
- ii) Political leaders - From India, Pakistan or the US; iii) Curfew/ protest - The clashes, protests/ curfew in the Valley/ protesters/ security forces in action.

Additionally, data was collected by assigning scores to the placement of stories, by considering the prominence scale and their placement on pages. If a news story appeared on the front page, it was considered the most important; and if it were placed on inside pages,

the story was be considered to be less important among the two categories under consideration. Accordingly, scores were assigned as 3 (high priority) and 1 (low priority).

Findings: In the multi-stage analysis, each stage represented a way of understanding news published from all the possible perspectives, and it does not imply hierarchy. The data is organised as follows:

Headline Analysis: Scanning headlines given to news stories helped researchers understand the focus given to the story by the newspaper concerned. Table 1 summarises focus areas viz. event, effect, and response:

Table 1: Headline focus in *TOI* and *The Hindu*:

Categories	<i>TOI</i>		<i>The Hindu</i>		Total	%
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
Incident	3	7.69	6	20	9	13.05
Effects	19	48.72	17	56.67	36	52.17
Responses	17	43.59	7	23.33	24	34.78
Total	39	100	30	100	69	100

Headlines present the news in a nutshell. For many a reader, headlines present news in a hurry, and hence even when a reader does not read the body text of the news, the headline tells him/her what is to be conveyed about by the newspaper. Whether newspapers use headlines to summarise the news in a few words or as luring devices, for readers, it news. Ecker & Lewandowsky (2014) note that headlines help readers browse through a large number of news items by giving a brief update of the news story, and serve as elements that attract readers to read the story further. Hence, readers use headlines to understand and interpret the entire event based on this one device.

Of the 39 headlines in *TOI*, the most (19 stories; 48.72%) focused on the effects of the killing of Burhan Wani, followed by responses to the killing (43.59%). The least number (7.69%) of headlines highlighted the killing itself. *The Hindu* published 30 headlines to inform readers about some aspect of this killing. Of these the most (17;56.67%) headlines focused on the effects, followed by 23.33% focused on the responses to the killing by various political leaders/ agencies, and the least focus (20%) was closely followed by the killing itself. In a total of 69 headlines published during these three continuous weeks, 36 (52.17%) highlighted the effects of the killing, both the newspapers considering the event of killing Burhan Wani least significant.

Though, like *TOI* (7.69%), *The Hindu* also has chosen to ignore the (killing) in favour of the effects and responses (56.67% and 23.33% respectively), it has a slightly higher rate of focus on the event (20%). This suggests a lack of interest in the person killed, on the side of both the papers.

A cursory glance at a few of the headlines adds to our understanding of the headlines published by the two newspapers: '11 killed, 200 hurt as Valley erupts over Wani's death', 'Mob tried to burn police post, 1 killed', 'Valley calm after 4 days of blood bath', and 'Protestors snatch police guns'. *TOI* headlines highlight violence that followed the killing of Wani, and avoid any direct mention of or focus on the dead person.

Similarly, *The Hindu's* headlines also mention Burhan Wani only in passing to help readers connect with the effects: 'Wani's death triggers fury, 10 killed, 200 hurt in Kashmir', 'Fresh violence in J & K 5 more dead', and 'Kashmir hospitals in a state of emergency'. Both the Table 1 as well as the content of these headlines show that the two newspapers present the killing of Burhan Wani as violence in the Valley, rather than the cause of that violence (killing of Wani).

While *TOI* did not present the killing of Wani (cause), but focused on the effect and political responses to it, *The Hindu* prioritised the effect, and treated the cause and the political responses relatively with the same magnitude. Overall, both quantitatively and qualitatively, *The Hindu* showed more awareness of the killing than *TOI* did.

News Space Dedicated

The second part of the analysis consisted of studying the content of the news stories. Researchers grouped the stories into five categories employing a conceptual approach. While theoretically 'grouping' or 'compartmentalising' various categories functions to identify all the 'grouped' stories as 'one capsule' with a similar gravitation and value-trajectory, in journalistic practice it functions to collapse multiple categories/ headlines into a single 'workable' and consolidated 'bulletin' as is practiced in television news bulletins and in packaging news in papers. Consequently, for a lay reader, all the news stories attain the same valence as the capsule.

Table 2: Category-wise News Story Frequencies & Space Allocation

Categories	<i>TOI</i>			<i>The Hindu</i>			Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	Space (sq. cm)	<i>f</i>	%	Space (sq. cm)	<i>f</i>	%
Burhan Wani	4	11.43	825.94	5	18.52	2596.63	9	14.52
Indian Armed force	5	14.28	767.58	4	14.81	1151.99	9	14.52
Violence	8	22.86	1359.11	8	29.63	1560.58	16	25.80
Indian Government	10	28.57	2649.56	3	11.11	791.18	13	20.97
Others	8	22.86	1653.85	7	25.93	1816.05	15	24.19
Total	35	100	7256.03	27	100	7916.43	62	100

As shown in Table 2, the total number of stories that mentioned "Burhan Wani" or "Wani" in their body text in *TOI* was 35, and in *The Hindu* 27. Though there were 16 and 13 stories in *The Hindu* and *TOI* respectively that did not mention "Burhan Wani" but were still found to be relevant to the Burhan Wani killing, but were not considered for examination.

Along with the analysis of the content, the space allocated to each category was also analysed to understand the importance given to the news content based on their categories.

After the grouping of stories under the respective categories it was found that both the papers collectively published 62 stories (*TOI*- 35 and *The Hindu*- 27) that covered the news related to Burhan Wani killing.

The unit of analysis, here, was the story about Burhan Wani. It was observed that there were a considerable number of stories that did not have the words Burhan Wani in the analysed unit, hence the researchers grouped the stories under the 'no-mention' category. This was done because there too many to be ignored. The stories were listed under the non-mention category after identifying the keywords that pointed their relevance to the Burhan Wani's killing and its effects. Some of the keywords were "current unrest", "Kashmir unrest", "and curfew".

In *TOI*, of the total 48 stories about Kashmir unrest (which included 'no-mention' stories as well), 35 stories mentioned 'Burhan Wani' in the content. The other 13 stories too spoke of the unrest in Kashmir which was a result of Burhan Wani killing. The 13 stories focused more on the curfew and various governments discussing the issue of Kashmir. As in Table 1, here too it was noticed that there was a tendency to drift away from the actual reason of the clashes (the killing), to portraying Kashmir as a land of curfew and trouble-makers.

Of the 35 stories in *TOI*, 4 (11. 43%) stories focused on Burhan Wani, who was shot dead on July 8, 2016 by the security forces in Kashmir. The stories spoke of the killing and the funeral procession of Burhan Wani. A news report about Burhan Wani and his past was also a part of the list in this category.

Five (14. 28%) stories were listed under Indian armed forces as the primary focus of the stories. All these stories focused on the measures and actions taken by the Indian armed force to bring the situation in Kashmir under control. They also highlighted the difficulties and challenges faced by the security forces, in their efforts to bring the Valley under control.

Indian Government and its response to the issue in Kashmir were highlighted in 10 stories (28.57%), making it the most frequently appearing category in the Burhan Wani news coverage in *TOI*. The response is summed up as how the Indian Government handled the situation and what were its implications for the situation in Kashmir.

TOI's second largest coverage concern was the 'others' and the 'violence' category. The stories listed in these categories focused on the third party response such as curfew and struggle of security forces. The most frequently highlighted third parties were Pakistan and the US. There were also stories of Kashmir media which was gagged by the J & K government. Eight stories (22. 86%) of the coverage were dedicated to reporting violence in the Valley. The number of people killed and injured during the curfew was highlighted throughout these stories. It focused on how the prevailing unrest had brought the entire Valley to a standstill.

Thirteen stories that did not directly mention Burhan Wani's killing and the curfew in the story content had highlighted how Pakistan blamed India for the strife in Kashmir and how India defended itself against the Pakistani accusations. The other main focus was the Kashmir media that was gagged for the fear of curfew and 'inflammatory news' that could cause further damage to the Valley.

The Hindu has shown a slightly more even pattern of news content compared to *TOI*, eventhough the focus themes are issues other than Burhan Wani. Of the total 43 stories, 27 mentioned Burhan Wani in their content. Five (18. 52%) focused on Burhan Wani, which included news of his killing, his funeral procession, and the youngsters' support for Burhan Wani in Kashmir.

Four stories (14. 81%) focused on the Indian Armed forces and 3 (11. 11%) focused on the Indian Government's view and response to the Kashmir unrest. In so publishing, *The*

Hindu, unlike *TOI*, suggested the readers to think not about the government, but about something else.

The highest numbers of stories focused on the violence in the Valley during the curfew as a result of the killing. Of these, 8 stories (29.63%) were about the violence alone, followed by the 'others' category (25.93%), which included Pakistan and the history of Kashmir conflict dominating the list. In discourse, this 'others' also suggests a distancing of everyone else from the self, which creates problems in the Valley. Political history of Kashmir could read not only as a story of rebelling youth, but also many ideological issues which have contributed to violence.

A similar pattern is observed in the space allocated for the stories under each category. *The Hindu* dedicated largest amount of space (2596.63 sq. cm.; 32.80%) to Burhan Wani, followed by 1816.05 sq. cm (22.93%) to 'others' and 1560.58 sq. cm. (19.71%) to 'violence'. While Indian army received 1151.99 sq. cm. space (14.55%), the mention of Indian Government was given 791.18 sq. cm (9.99%). There is a departure in the space dedicated to these categories from the news story frequencies. While the first and third places for maximum space-exposure interchanged their places, Indian armed forces and Indian Government remained steady at the last two positions. Like in frequency table, space dedicated (ranking) to 'others' was 2nd highest. In *The Hindu's* scheme, the Indian Government and armed forces (power-wielding agencies) do not find much importance.

Overall, both in the number of stories and space dedicated, *TOI* focused more on the Indian government and its response to violence and unrest. The daily used Pakistan's involvement and its blame game to show the Indian government in good light. Patterns such as highlighting the violence in Kashmir as sponsored by Pakistan, were seen in these stories while it dedicated the least space to the Army. In other words, the focus of coverage, and hence the agenda, seemed more like the Government's propaganda, and its version.

The agenda that manifests through the coverage is that clashes in Kashmir were terrorist activity and was Pakistan's design to grab Kashmir from India. It means, people protesting against the Government policies and actions were 'terrorists', hence they did not merit to be mentioned in its news coverage. The issue is covered through a political lens than looking at the killing from a human perspective. Neither does the condition of the people in the Valley, who were going through the tough times, strikes as the focus in the coverage. Though there were one or at the most two stories that mentioned the problems faced by the people in Kashmir, the focus in these stories eventually was the violence caused by the 'terrorists' in the Valley.

Framing Burhan Wani

Based on the tone and context of the news reports, the researchers identified three frames (positive, negative, and neutral) in the news about Burhan Wani. As can be seen in Table 3, *TOI* published 35 news stories as against the 27 by *The Hindu*.

Table 3: Framing Wani through Frequency and Space:

Frames	<i>TOI</i>			<i>The Hindu</i>			Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	Space (sq. cms)	<i>f</i>	%	Space (sq. cms)	<i>f</i>	%
Positive	7	20.00	1433.15	8	29.63	1518.63	15	24.19
Neutral	15	42.86	3138.08	12	44.44	3598.21	27	43.55
Negative	13	37.14	2684.80	7	25.93	2799.59	20	32.26
Total	35	100	7256.03	27	100	7916.43	62	100

Both the newspapers framed Burhan Wani mostly in neutral terms. Of the 35 stories published by *TOI*, 15 (42.86%) and of the 27 stories by *The Hindu*, 12 (44.44%) portrayed him in neutral or frames. Here neutral frames refer to matter-of-fact mentions. These stories called him a Hizbul commander or shot dead by the security forces. None of these stories mentioned Wani's name more than once or, at the most twice in their content, since the focus of the story was not Burhan Wani.

In 13 of its stories (37.4%) *TOI* portrayed Burhan Wani in negative frames. The use of noun/ adjectives like terrorist were the most frequently attached to Wani. Apart from this, there were context-based mentions of Burhan Wani, where the history of conflict in Kashmir was highlighted. Mentions of Afzal Guru and Lashkar-e-Taiba were employed to associate him with banned Pakistani terror units. *TOI* also mentions how Burhan Wani had encouraged the youth to take to arms and fight against the security forces. He is framed as the reason for the current chaos in Kashmir.

The remaining 7 (20%) stories in *TOI* show Burhan Wani as a leader of the youth in Kashmir, who are fighting for the freedom of Kashmir. He is framed as a martyr, now became the inspiration for the youth in Kashmir.

The Hindu, in contrast, published second largest number of stories that portrayed Burhan Wani as a positive character. It had 8 stories (29.63%) of the total 27 which showed Burhan Wani in positive frames, while 7 stories (25.93%) showed him in a negative frame. But like *TOI*, the largest number of stories (44.44%) portrayed him in neutral frames.

Another observation made was considering the positive and negative portrayal of Burhan Wani in both the papers. Both *TOI* and *The Hindu* portrayed Burhan Wani in a negative frame in stories that were mainly focused on Indian Government. This was a recurring pattern observed in both the newspapers. Such a framing reinforces Wani as against the Government and as anti-national, and strengthens the nationalist agenda of the papers.

Placement Priority Issues

Front page of a newspaper is the first visible news page in a broadsheet paper, and it is the face of a newspaper. Newspaper layout is worked out depending on, what the media management and editorial team consider news values to be; news is thus graded and laid in the order of importance. Hence, news "selection process . . . sometimes more important than what 'really happens'" (Westerstahl & Johansson, 1994: 72). This 'what happens' is interpreted and graded by media gatekeepers. It implies, "ideology might influence the application of news value" (ibid: 75). Thus news selection, grading and display work to set the agenda of the newspapers.

Conventionally, on a regular day, the most important news story appears on the upper fold of the front page, supported by other designing tools such as fonts, font sizes, grain, column width, pictures, and length of the story. Such placement of news leads to the next most important story, usually placed adjacent, going down to the lower fold of the page, and then regressing in importance to inside pages. Accordingly, placement priority scores were assigned: 3 for front page and 1 for inside page². Such a coding implies that higher the placement score index, greater the importance of the news story, and consequently, the wider display of agenda of the papers.

Table 4: Page Placement Priority

News paper	Priority Three – Front Page				Priority One- Inside Page				
	Category	Incident	Effects	Response	Total score	Incident	Effects	Response	Total score
TOI		0x3	5x3	4x3	27	3x1	14x1	12x1	29
TH		1x3	6x3	4x3	33	5x1	11x1	3x1	19
Total score		3	33	24	60	8	25	15	48

Table 4 shows the importance attached by the newspapers to the Burhan Wani killing. *TOI* published 9 stories (priority 1, score 27) on the front page. It also published 29 stories (priority 3, score 29) in its inside 'National' page, which is usually dedicated to 'other' states of less importance. After the front page is occupied by the "most important news", 'city' and 'state' (pages), in which the newspaper edition, follow. They occupy the next rank in importance. They are followed by 'nation' or 'states' page news, which may not be of much interest to the readers of that state. Here, usually, the news from all the states of India is laid. Hence there is every chance of missing/ ignoring this news by most readers. By relegating Kashmir news to the third priority, *TOI* set its agenda of Kashmir as unimportant. While the frequency count (29) suggests relatively a big number on the inside page, its importance value is less than 9 top priority stories on the front pages, and is less visible. They attract less attention and prominence on account of visibility than priority 1.

Similarly, *The Hindu* published 11 stories on the front page (score 31, priority: 1). It also published 19 stories on its 'national' page (score 19), which is much lower than the score 31 on its front page. It means, as seen in the earlier tables, *The Hindu* gave much more prominence to the Burhan Wani episode and wanted it to be noticed easily and prominently at the national level by placing it on the front page than being ignored on the inside pages.

In the three categories, *TOI* did not give any priority (score: 00) to incidence on its front page; priority score for effects 15 on the front page, and 14 on the inside page. Similarly, it also gave nearly equal importance to response (score: 12) against the 12 score on the inside page. Comparatively, *TOI's* grading news for prominence did not show much distinction on placement index.

The Hindu, on its front page, scored 3 points on the incident criterion, 16 on effect and 12 on response (total 33). Its placement score (priority 3) for this episode was 5 for episode, 11 for its effect, and 3 for response to it. *TOI* and *The Hindu*, evinced a different set

². Since, in the entire sample, there were only two news items placed in the lower fold of the front page, all front page stories were considered to be of equal importance, and were assigned top priority scores 3. Both were in *The Hindu*.

of foci in their placement of the news. *TOI* did not evince much difference between classifying news as of national importance (front page) or as Regional/ States, hence restricted to Kashmir alone (national page). In whatever importance it gave as top priority, pertained to the government or violence new, and not to the slain man (consistent with table 1), whereas *The Hindu* differentiated and graded news, setting the killing as national level agenda, thus calling readers' attention to the slain man as well as the consequences (violence) and government response. It placed more related news on its front page and presented it as news of national importance. While *TOI* seemed to promote government's nationalist agenda, *The Hindu* was relatively less enthusiastic about it.

Pictures: a Visual Analysis

For visual analysis, all the pictures -both accompanying stories and stand alone- in the sample were considered for their three photojournalistic devices: Composition (all the visual elements framed), photographic framing (camera shots and angles), and Captions/ cut lines (text used to explain the pictures). The popular notion is that camera does not lie. But as Knightley (2003) argues, 'although in most cases the camera does not lie directly, it can lie brilliantly by omission' (cit. in Parry, 2008). This is visual framing by omission in photography. The underlying notion in visual framing is that pictures do frame subjects and set agenda. Hence it is essential that this framing is decoded.

Under these three photojournalistic elements, pictures in Burhan Wani case were studied under for Burhan Wani, political leaders, and the Valley categories.

Table 5: Photojournalistic Focus by the Two Papers:

Category	<i>TOI</i>		The Hindu	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Burhan Wani	2	9.09	5	23.81
Political leaders	6	27.27	3	14.29
The Valley	14	63.64	13	61.90
Total	22	100	21	100

In keeping with Tables 2 and 4, Table 5 consistently shows the two newspapers' tendency away from the youth killed. While *TOI* leans towards a 'nationalist' agenda paternalised by national leaders against the cause, *The Hindu* avoids such idolisation of political leaders. But the primary focus in both the papers is the Valley: *TOI* had 6 (9.09%) photographs listed under the category of political leaders, the most number of pictures (14; 63.64%) of the Valley that was under curfew for 99 days, and heavy security cover all the time, besides intermittent violence, and 2 (9.09%) photographs of Burhan Wani and his funeral procession. The focus of the stories in *TOI* is violence and politicians from India, Pakistan and the US, while Burhan Wani is relegated to the last place. While both the papers chose to highlight violence and restrictions in the Valley (*TOI*: 63.64% and *The Hindu*: 61.90%), they differed significantly in their prioritisation of Burhan Wani and politicians - the former setting politicians ahead of the slain man, and the latter choosing Wani over politicians.

Another observation concerning pictures is about the visual composition of security forces in the frame. Both the news papers chose to employ a low angle shot of the security forces in guard at the Valley. A low angle shot is used to show an overpowering subject, dominant and aggressive or ominous. Using low angle shots for security forces in

photographs impresses viewers' minds accordingly, and indicates that the newspapers want to portray the security forces as the dominant and controlling the Valley. It makes other people to be seen as at the mercy of security forces. By extension, it would also suggest the Valley to be troublesome, and unable to function without security forces, ignoring intervening determinants in Kashmir.

Fig. 1:



For example, Fig. 1 shows a soldier on guard at Lal Chowk, the main market, in front of barbed wire fence. The Clock Tower/ *Ghanta Ghar* is a usually populated area with shops and a school. But the picture frames it as completely desolate, under armed security forces. For an outside reader, it is framed not just as the Lal Chowk that is desolate and dangerous, but entire Kashmir. Readers are presented with this fearsome picture of Kashmir and Kashmiri youth (represented by Burhan Wani), who are framed as 'anti-national' in the nationalist agenda.

Conclusions

A closer analysis of the two newspapers reveals that both the papers presented a mixed agenda in framing Burhan Wani either as neutral, and hence to be ignored, or as negative. The overall portrayal of Wani as published by the newspapers, especially the *Times of India*, was that he was a terrorist even before the investigating agencies concluded as such.

Both the newspapers relegated the killing of a citizen, which led to the death of 84 other fellow-citizens and 99 consecutive days of curfew, to the last rank. In particular, *TOI* consistently framed Wani against Indian leaders.

In the space dedication category, *TOI* dedicated the least space to the mentions of Burhan Wani, while devoting maximum space to Indian Government stories, followed by violence and 'others'. Unlike *TOI*, *The Hindu* gave least space to Indian Government, while giving prime focus to the effects of the killing. It gave third most importance to Burhan Wani.

In *TOI*, a significant insight offered by this study is that the 'nationalist' notion of Indian citizenship as represented by Indian political leaders and the Indian army. In contrast, *The Hindu* presented nationalism as the bleeding Kashmir, following Burhan Wani's killing. Such a portrayal in the dailies had the visual support wherein most of the pictures showed Indian Armed forces guarding the Valley. When Kashmir is shown pictorially, the pictures are of burning realities of Kashmir.

Democracy & Media

Media play an important role in building and nurturing a democracy. Since news media are concerned with disseminating information and creating public opinion, it is assumed media also create alert and well-informed citizens. By extension, an ill-informed public can harm a democracy since information that is manufactured, twisted, and presented with hidden agenda, can ill-form minds, create false sense of pride, desensitize people to fellow-citizens, breed enmity between communities, and create divisions in a society.

This study found the two English newspapers did disseminate some news about the trouble-torn Kashmir. The two newspapers presented news from two different perspectives. Perspectives contributed to framing Burhan Wani either as negative or as one who does not merit the attention of rest of the country (neutral). In its reporting, *TOI* highlighted the violence that broke out in the aftermath of the killing, and ignored the killing. Its main foci were either violence or political leaders, whereas Burhan Wani was given the least coverage.

The Hindu also focused on violence in general, but when actors were taken as evaluating criterion, it gave much less importance to security forces and political leaders, whereas Burhan Wani found some significance on its pages. Similarly, the visual analysis puts the focus on Indian armed forces.

The differences in the two newspapers in reporting and presenting the news of Burhan Wani killing show that newspapers take different points of view to collecting, processing, presenting and disseminating information while reporting Kashmir. Such sharp differences crop up either from their of ideologies or pressures from various stakeholders. These stakeholders determine the agenda, and the media outlets, accordingly, frame the subjects they cover, which raises two important questions: first, the credibility and fairness of the information consumers receive, and their sources; second, newspapers' role in nurturing a democracy which gives them the right to exist freely and fearlessly in that society.

If, as suggested by Hyun and Moon (2016: 510), certain news sources consistently keep highlighting the bipolar attributes of certain players, it is bound lead to bipolar attitudes; and, as shown by the current research, newspapers would have played a divisive role in a society, undermining the goals of democracy.

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