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Usage of humor to Overshadow Islamophobia in the World

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Abstract

After 9/11 incident in United States, a hatred gap arose between the Americans and Americans Muslims. Many Muslim stand-up comedians started their efforts to decrease this tension through humorous performances and comic screen plays. Also, Muslim comedians are neutralizing negative social discrimination between Muslims and other world to reduce the impact of Islamophobia in world. Purpose of the study is to examine the part of Muslim comedians and the sentiments of the listeners about their stand-up humor videos. This study is qualitative content analysis of comments on videos of two American Muslim comedians Negin Farsad and Obeidallah Dean. For data analysis Linguistic Inquiry & Word Count (LIWC) used to analyses the positive emotions, negative emotions and emotional tone. Findings exhibit that Muslim comedians are playing critical part to assist the Muslim community handle with the effect of Islamophobia. Study also investigated that Muslim stand-up comedians are contributing to lessen the

stereotyping discernments and disliked comments about Muslim identity globally. It is concluded that comedy has also helped in comforting the audiences that Arab and Muslim are not unpatriotic and adversarial to the United States or to other world.

Key Words: Muslim, Comedians, Stand-up comedy, Islamophobia

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Introduction

Muslim American stand-up comedians suffered hatred remarks and stereotypes perceptions about them after the attacks of September 11, 2001 because of their Muslim identity. However, Amarasingam (2010) studied that Muslim comedians indulged themselves into discussions, helping the Muslim community to recover the backlash after 9/11 and try to repaint the general public belief of Arab and Muslims as unpatriotic and antagonistic to the United States. Comedy is a significant social force; however, the spiritual scholars have hardly ever taken the cultural significance of humor seriously. As Andreea (2012) explored that comedy tours such as "Allah Made Me Funny", "The Axis of Evil" and "Arabs Gone Wild" artists such as Azhar Usman, Mo Amer, Ahmed Ahmed, Aron Kader, Preacher Moss, Dean Obidallah, Maz Jobrani, and Maysoon Zayid enjoy a great success because of their particular combination of self-deprecating humor and critique of the prejudices about Arabs and Muslims circulating in American society. In this struggle, Arab and Muslim American comedians have realized that humor can be used as a platform to highlight the issues affecting their ethnic and religious groups. Other minorities like Jews and African Americans used stand-up comedy as a tool to negotiate assimilation and positive recognition into the American "melting pot." Therefore, this research is aimed to uncover the connection between stand-up comedy of Muslims in world and the sentiment of audience about

them, as well as examined the role of the stand-up comedy that reverses the discourses and representations of Islamophobia.

Definitions of Islamophobia:

Islamophobia is one of those terms which still need a proper definition. Kalin (2011) found that the term "Islamophobia" gained popularity in the 1990s and after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and it has been widely used in the United States. However, the phenomenon of Islamophobia is neither a result of the terrorist attacks nor limited to American society. Sheeni (2011) found the definition of Islamophobia as an "ideological formation" of fear and hatred against all Muslims. For Sheeni, "an ideological formation is created by a culture that deploys particular tropes, analyses and beliefs, as fact upon which governmental policies and social practices are framed". Foucault (1972) talked about Sheeni's idea of discursive formation which is inserted in contexts of institution, power relations and political practices. The origin of Islamophobia denotes an attitude against Islam but paradoxically the dimensions underlying Islamophobia is religion. In last decade, many of the authors who examined Islamophobia think that a version directed at Islam exceeds a strictly religious dimension. Among such events, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 gained attention on American territory. In this regard, Islamophobia is formed on a range of fabricated debates that put Muslims at the boundary line in the current world.

Problem Statement:

Islamophobia is becoming common stereotype in world and even this attitude is disgusting against the Muslim comedian.

However, the Muslim comedians are trying to negotiate positive recognition of their identities in non-Muslim society. Therefore, this phenomenon needs to be addressed that so called liberal societies how deals with those comedians who share happiness among the masses.

Theoretical Framework

This research employs framing theory, which is accredited to Goffman (1974). This assumption observes importance as primarily in the news information. Just as Stephen Sheeni (2011) defines Islamophobia as an "ideology of hatred and fear against all Muslims, most Arabs and sometimes even mistakenly Arabs or Muslims ". For Sheeni, "Ideology is created by a culture that shows specific tendencies, analyzes and beliefs as a framework for government policies and social practices." Sheeni's discourse perspective can be traced back to Michael Foucault (1972), who discusses this form as a truth-claim in the context of power relations and institutions in the context of political practice.

In this regard, Rupar (2012) argues that media coverage of adverse events in Islam often include harmful classification, summary of events, coverage of single area of the narrative, combination of certainty and perspective, the use of derogatory terms, lack of physical examination , as well as mismatch of title, text, image and audio content. Kabir's (2010) study explains that Islam or Muslims are only stated while they relate to violent behavior, rebellious, radicalism or prejudice. A different reflection of the newspaper is that only in times of crisis will it focus on Islam or Islam. Since

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September 11, not only anti-Muslim sentiment has been strengthened, but new changes have taken place. Occasions such as the incursion of Iraq, the circumstance within the Middle East and the expanding utilization of suicide planes have started antagonistic vibe towards the Muslim community around the world. Frost (2008) found that this has had a major impact on Muslims, constantly described by the media and the government as a threat through the misinformation, the misrepresentation of particulars and the unfavorable stereotypes. Jacobsen (2012) also believe that there are still negative events that govern the media reporting of Islam and Muslims. Although Gardner (2008) did not elaborate on the process of choosing what appropriate descriptions to present, and they present ample evidence that the media became bad about Islam. Such perspectives may affect masses' perception of Islam, Pennington, Willnat, Bashir & Ogan (2014).

An overview of 1,003 grown-ups at the Pew Research Center in August 2010 examined that more Americans had a harsh and sympathetic view of Islam and a 38% self-reported unfavorable thoughts. Other surveys confirm that Americans assume Muslims are educating their kids to hate and think Muslims give less importance to life than other (CAIR 2004).

Literature Review

Stand-up comedy that normally is conveyed by a single artist communicates straight to the viewers in some resemblance of an unplanned way. Stand-up comedians, like authors, have very unusual technique, but the composition for captivating masses is always the similar. The best stand-up comedian build well-prepared routines seem spontaneous and casual. In stand-up comedy, the humorist usually brings a chain of hilarious stories, jokes and one-liners, usually called as monologue. Stand-up comedy is typically performed in comedy clubs, neo-burlesques, pubs, nightclubs, bars, theatres and colleges. A Swedish comedian Malmberg (1992) lays down few basic rules in his essay "Världensnästäldstayrke: stand-up comedian", to define this term; One has to be funny, alone, stand up, talk directly to the audience, to be oneself by not using props neither wearing costumes nor interpreting a character, not use a written script be independent upon the context and make audience laugh without much specific explanations.

Malmberg in Crispin & Danielsson (1992) found that some comedians might perform while sitting down such as Irish comedian Dave Allen. Some interpret characters; some might use props for certain skits, and so on. American professor Mint (1985) researched American humor in detail and presents a more fine meaning of what stand-up humor is in his article "Standup comedy as social and cultural mediation". His basic definition is nonetheless quite similar to Malmberg's: "A strict, limiting definition of standup comedy would describe an encounter between a single, standing performer

behaving comically and/or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle".

In terms of production, Stand-up humor is a very simple performing art. Props, costumes and scenery are used by certain comedians although these are not the main focus of the performance and are used very often. One key rule that is perhaps unnoticed is innovation which is most important in stand-up comedy than in any other performance art. For example, in music it is a common and widely accepted practice to play note by note the work of other musicians. This practice is known as plagiarism in the context of stand-up comedy. Thus, a comedian has to come up with his or her own work material or alternatively with original work material provided by a writer even when addressing similar subjects with similar points of view present in the material of other stand-up comedians.

Turner (1979) found that standup comedy is very useful in understanding the form of talent, humor and well-liked culture. The tone and way of delivering the joke changes the standup comedy and differs it with the content but the beauty and soul of effective art is in creative twist. This misrepresentation is getting through the delivering style, inconsistent contextual parody and exaggerations of the jokes.

Defining Muslim Standup Comedy:

Muslim standup comedy is about Muslims put together jokes on a Muslim, non-Muslims and other Muslims. In 2008, Muslim

standup humor gained a new level of recognition. A documentary titled "Standup: Muslim American comics come of age" released by the public broadcasting system from "America at a crossroads". The documentary shows the life and occupation of comedians like Dean Obeidallah, Tissa Hami, Maysoon Zayid, Ahmed Ahmed, and Azhar Usman. It explained the jokes Muslim comedians about their Muslim inheritance, literary background, and most of the complete criticism Muslims deal with since September 11, 2001.The assault that happened on September 11, 2001 have vividly altered the impression of Muslims amongst the American community. Since September 11, 2001 Islam and Muslims turned out to be most discussed topic.

Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend (Bilici 2010) consisted a debate of Muslim comedy affiliate people having a concern of Muslims. Mucahit Bilici attributed to Muslim standup humor as "ethnic comedy". Many Muslim comedians have a view that the incident of September, 2001 gave them a new opportunity and opened a new perspective.

Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008) found that Muslim stand-up comedy has the characteristic of portraying personal opinion in performance. After 9/11, many comedians share their experiences regarding a detail description about the groups they stand for conventional media representations and political conversations.

Islamophobia:

Allen (2010) found that Islamophobia is an ideology articulated through conversation or an emotional force, described

extensively as 'baseless aggression toward Muslims'. The Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society (Halstead, 2008) explains four kind of Islamophobia: pre thoughtful private Islamophobia (emotional discrimination), post- thoughtful private Islamophobia (vigilant and deliberate discrimination), organizational Islamophobia (strategies construct into format) and governmental Islamophobia (government schemes to bound the civil liberties of Muslims). Ansari & Hafez (2012) found that a current flip in research has immersed larger investigation of organizational and political aspects, examining preconception not as subliminal pathology, however to a certain extent as an active set of habits.

Sentiment Analysis:

For higher cognitive process the self-opinionated text is vital in sentiment analysis. One needs to perceive the essential terminologies attached with the opinion mining at the same time as collecting the dogmatic transcripted content and dealing it as input for the opinion mining structures. As stated by Liu (Natural Language Processing, 2012) data accessible in transcripted shape can be described into two most important elements: Opinions and facts. Opinion Orientation is associated to belief in sentiment analysis; opinion can be described as, a constructive or unconstructive view, judgment, sentiment or emotions about object by an opinion holder. The main function of sentiment analysis is to achieve constructive or unconstructive sentiments from particular opinionated textual content. The word sentiment classification is employed to categorize an opinion based on even if it states the

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positive opinion or negative opinion. Opinion terms and Opinion slogan in the dogmatic text positive or negative sentiments which are frequently employed to utter sentiment of the opinion possessor are called as opinion words. We can take the amazing, beautiful, good, etc. as positive opinion words and negative opinion words like, poor, bad, weak, etc. Moreover, as explained earlier verbs like hate, dislike, etc. and nouns, adverbs, adjectives, like junk, crap and rubbish are used as opinion words.

Objective of the study:

- To highlight that the stand-up comedy reverses the discourses and representations of Islamophobia.

- To examine the relationship between sentiments of the audience about Muslim Comedians and Islamophobia.

Research questions:

- To examine the relationship between sentiments of the audience about Muslim Comedians and Islamophobia.

- To study the relationship between sentiments of the audience and soft image of Muslim Comedians.

- To emphasize that the stand-up comedy reverses the discourses and representations of Islamophobia.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate "how the humor is used to overshadow Islamophobia in World ". In this part the details of how the research was conducted will be discussed and it will also give explanations how the data was collected and how it was examined.

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This study has adopted qualitative method as in qualitative research; Population of this study was the Muslim comedians in America. According to Wood and Haber (2013) the selection of the major potential sample is to ensure representation and generalization of the study. Sample is the most viewed videos of these selected comedians. The first one is Negin Farsad, is an American stand-up comedian, filmmaker, writer and actress of Iranian descendant situated in New York City. She has written for and show-up on IFC, PBS, Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, MTV and others. She is producer/director of the feature films "The Muslims Are Coming" and "Nerdcore Rising". She is the writer of the freshly released "How to Make White People Laugh" which was suggested by Oprah Magazine and selected for the Thurber Prize for Humor. Farsad released her first book in 2016 entitled How to Make White People Laugh.

Second comedian is Dean Obeidallah 48; Born in the huge State of New Jersey, Dean, an award winning comedian has appeared on ABC's "The View", "Axis of Evil", " Comedy Central's, Comedy special and is the co-producer and co-author of Comedy Central.com's notably highly praised internet series "The Watch List," featuring a cast of all Middle Eastern-American sketch comedians and standup comedians.

Using purposive sampling technique four videos from YouTube were selected on the basis of the most views and comments for each of the two selected Muslim Comedians. By

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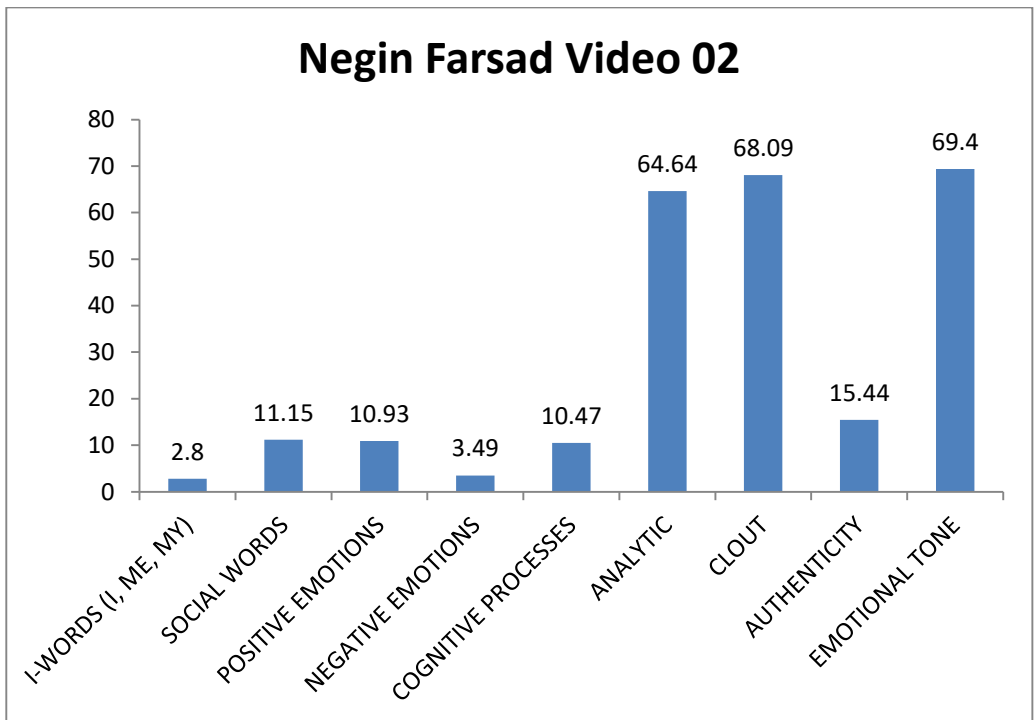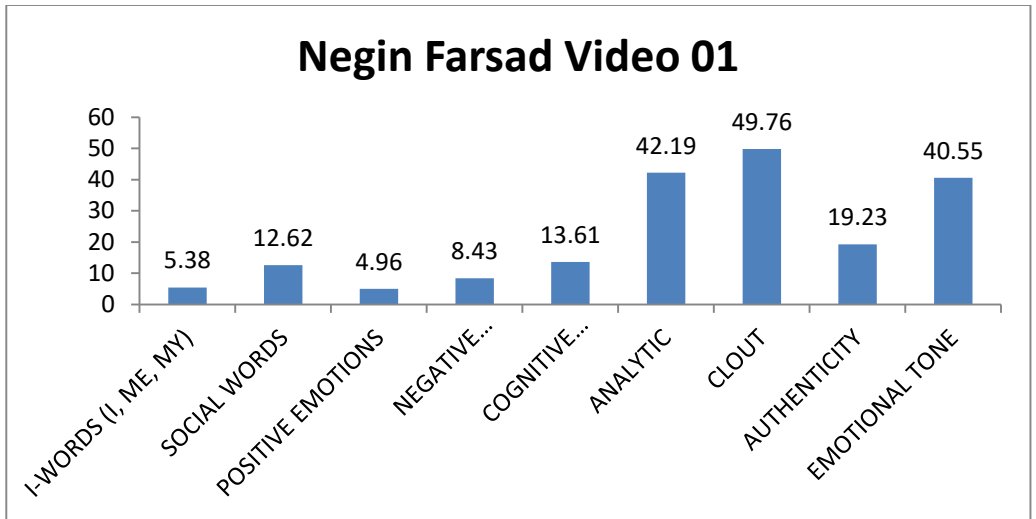applying purposive sampling ten comments on each video were collected for the analysis.
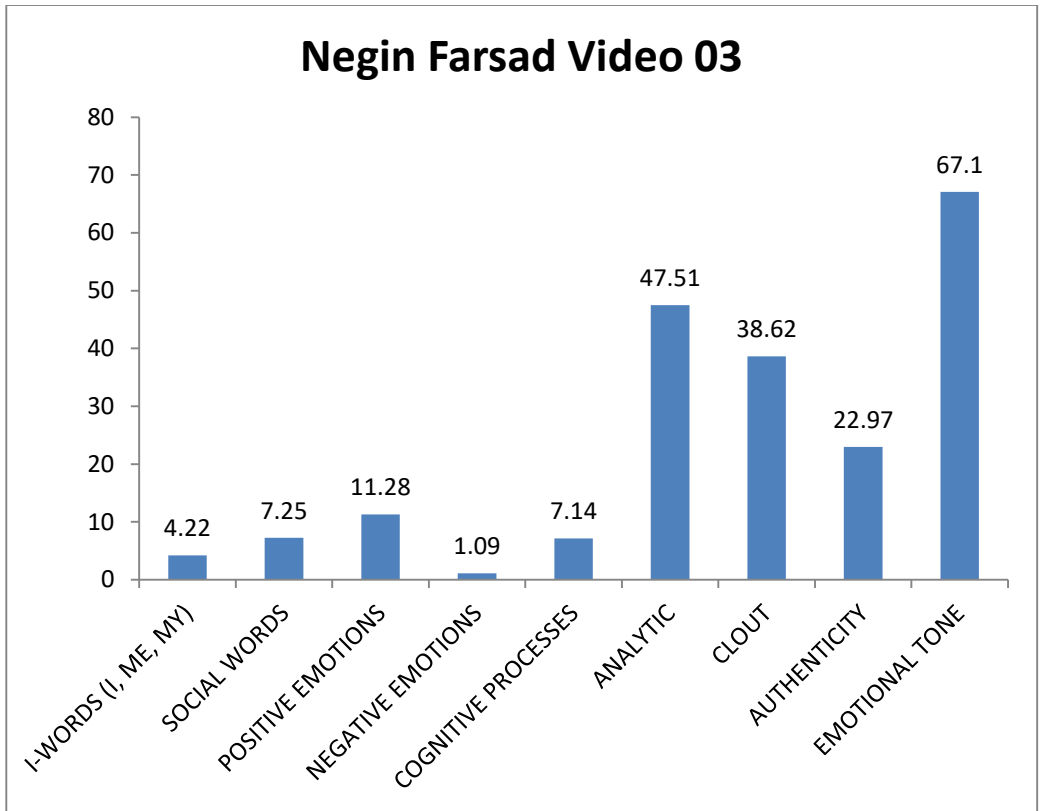
Results

Table 1

	Negin Farsad			
TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	V1	V2	V3	V4
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	5.38	2.8	4.22	4.74
SOCIAL WORDS	12.62	11.15	7.25	12.74
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	4.96	10.93	11.28	20.55
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	8.43	3.49	1.09	0
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	13.61	10.47	7.14	8.34
ANALYTIC	42.19	64.64	47.51	41.57
CLOUT	49.76	68.09	38.62	62.35
AUTHENTICITY	19.23	15.44	22.97	17.83
EMOTIONAL TONE	40.55	69.4	67.1	91.68

In table 1, the results show that in videos 01 (V1) positive emotion is 4.96 which is less than negative emotions 8.34. Similarly positive emotion is more in video 2 (V 2)i.e. 10.93. In video 03, positive emotion is 11.28 however negative is 1.09. Result of video 04 shows that 20.55 are positive however negative emotion is null.

Negin Farsad Video 01

Category	Value
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	5.38
SOCIAL WORDS	12.62
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	4.96
NEGATIVE…	8.43
COGNITIVE…	13.61
ANALYTIC	42.19
CLOUT	49.76
AUTHENTICITY	19.23
EMOTIONAL TONE	40.55

Negin Farsad Video 02

Category	Value
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	2.8
SOCIAL WORDS	11.15
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	10.93
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	3.49
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	10.47
ANALYTIC	64.64
CLOUT	68.09
AUTHENTICITY	15.44
EMOTIONAL TONE	69.4

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Negin Farsad Video 03

A bar chart titled "Negin Farsad Video 03" with the following values:

Category	Value
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	4.22
SOCIAL WORDS	7.25
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	11.28
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	1.09
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	7.14
ANALYTIC	47.51
CLOUT	38.62
AUTHENTICITY	22.97
EMOTIONAL TONE	67.1

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Table 2

	Dean Obeidallah			
TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	V1	V2	V3	V4
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	3.28	5.98	4.42	4.35
SOCIAL WORDS	8.87	10.78	24.75	21.3
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	16.5	18.63	10.85	15.08
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	3.38	2.65	5.34	0
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	5.91	11.2	9.06	8.88
ANALYTIC	65.04	45.26	42.18	43.83
CLOUT	63.92	60.62	54.9	88.2

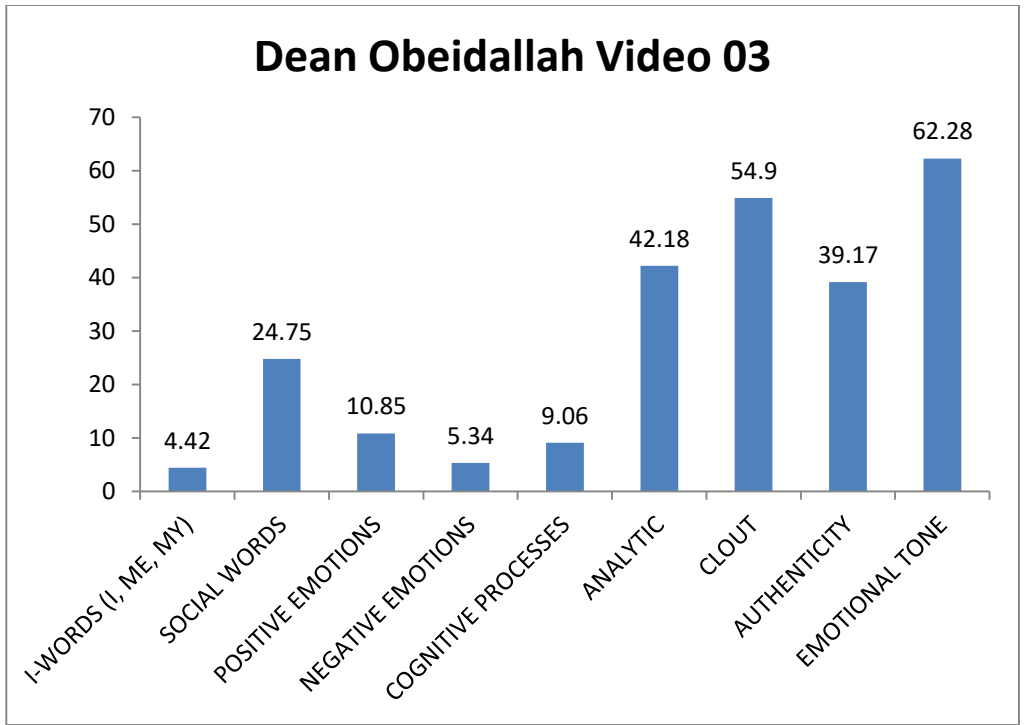| AUTHENTICITY	27.18	39.07	39.17	33.64
EMOTIONAL TONE	77.04	88.78	62.28	84.36

In table 2, the results show that in videos 01 positive emotion is 16.5 which is less than negative emotions 3.38. Similarly positive emotion is more in video 2 i.e 18.63 and 2.65 is negative. In video 03, positive emotion is 10.85 however negative is 5.34. Result of video 04 show that 15.08 are positive however negative emotion is null.
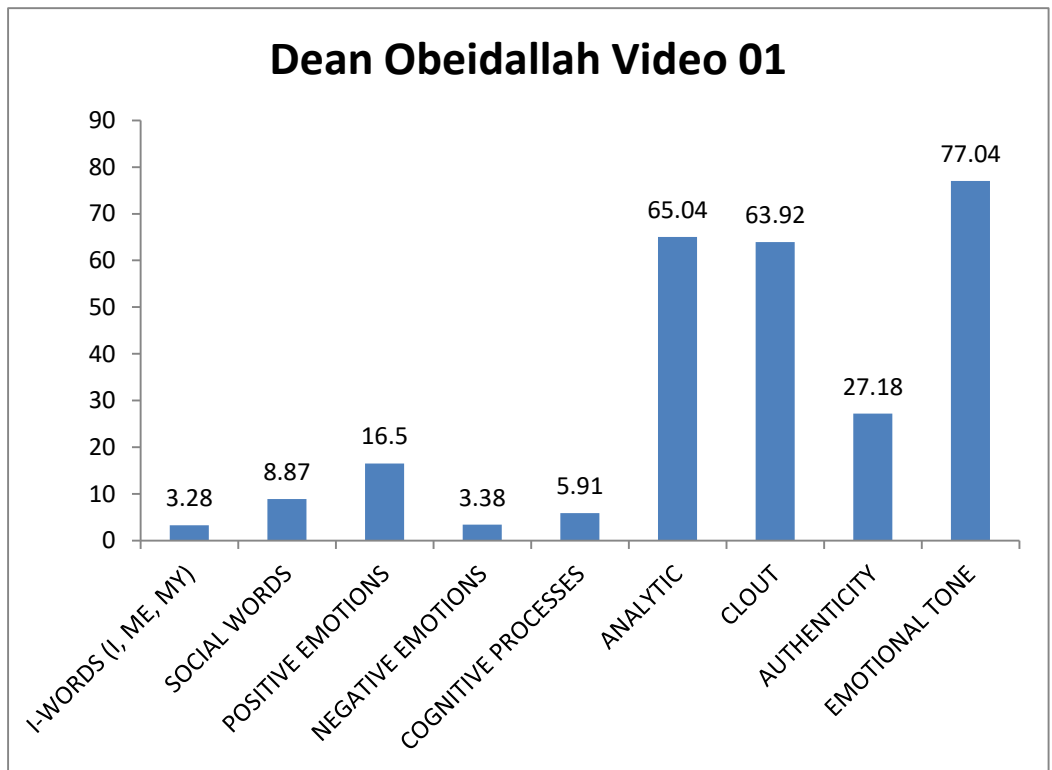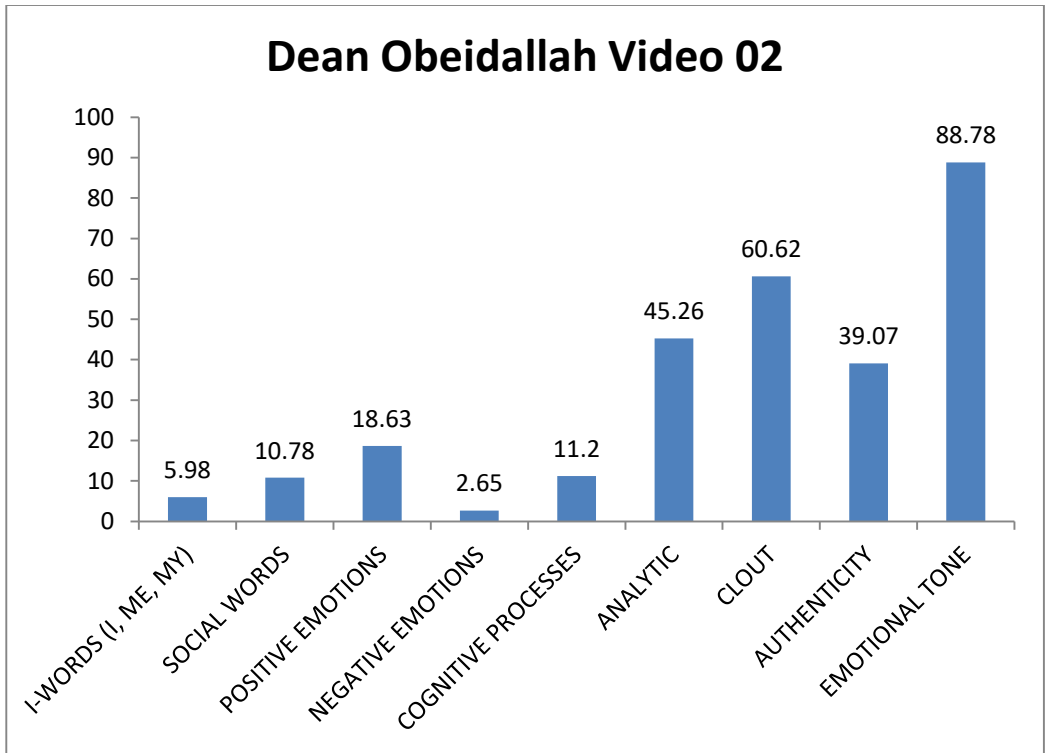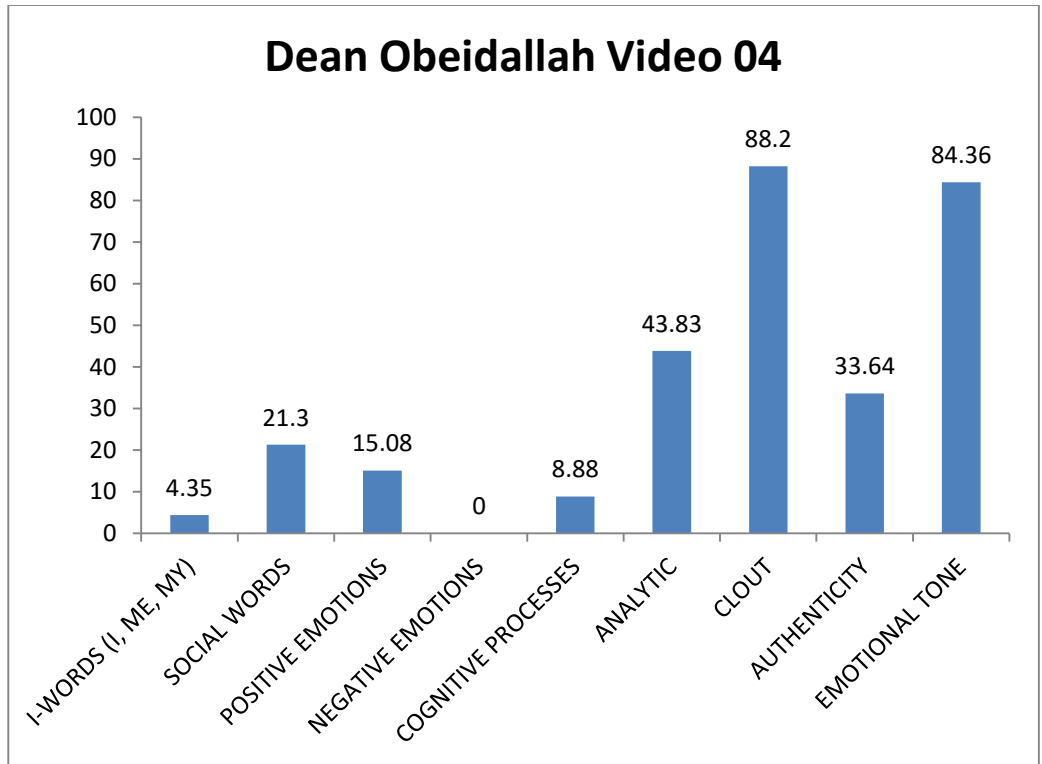
Dean Obeidallah Video 01

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Dean Obeidallah Video 02

Category	Value
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	5.98
SOCIAL WORDS	10.78
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	18.63
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	2.65
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	11.2
ANALYTIC	45.26
CLOUT	60.62
AUTHENTICITY	39.07
EMOTIONAL TONE	88.78

Dean Obeidallah Video 03

Dean Obeidallah Video 04

Category	Value
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	4.35
SOCIAL WORDS	21.3
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	15.08
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	0
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	8.88
ANALYTIC	43.83
CLOUT	88.2
AUTHENTICITY	33.64
EMOTIONAL TONE	84.36

Combined results of both Muslim Comedians:

Table 3

TRADITIONAL LIWC DIMENSION	Negin Farsad	Dean Obeidallah
I-WORDS (I, ME, MY)	4.285	4.5075
SOCIAL WORDS	10.94	16.425
POSITIVE EMOTIONS	11.93	15.265
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	3.25	2.8425
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	48.9775	8.7625
ANALYTIC	48.9775	49.0775
CLOUT	54.705	66.91

AUTHENTICITY	18.8675	34.765
EMOTIONAL TONE	67.1825	78.115

In table 3 show cumulative results of all the videos of three comedians. Comments on Negin Farsad's videos shows 11.93 however 3.25 are negative. Similarly comments on Dean Obeidallah's videos 15.265 were positive and 2.8425 were negative.

Operational definitions:

Variables

S. No	Words Used in Comments	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
1	Islamophobia	Islamophobia is the term use as fear about Muslim or Islam to other people	Thoughts about Muslim or Islam used to express negative attitudes or emotions (Bleich (2011).
2	Social Media Networking sites	Website that uses to share, creates, generate and spread data with having complete feedback and immediate	The sites which given the detail of social identities and can be explored. (Holmes, 2014). Three main site

		responses through text.	i.e Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Sr.No	Positive Words	Neutral Words	Negative Words
1	love	dodge	shit
2	glad	electoral	Hating
3	good	swear	odd
4	different	scripted	off slightly
5	real		fuck
6	truth		fucking
7	better		stupid
8	Get famous		forced
9	ethics		weird
10	favorite		upset
11	funniest		disappearing

Findings and Discussion

In certain unfortunate events where Muslim faced a lot of image issues in world, similarly American comedians also had to go

through hatred remarks from their viewers. Amarasingam (2010) Muslim comedians are trying to create a positive image in world by using the kind of dialogues which can bring surroundings of harmony and peace with world, hence creating the positive representation of Muslims in world. Andreea(2012) studied that comedy by Muslim comedians, like Arabs Gone Wild, The Axis of Evil, and Allah Made Me Funny. The comedians Azhar Usman, Mo Amer, Maysoon Zayid, Maz Jobrani, Dean Obidallah , Ahmed Ahmed, Preacher Moss and Aron Kader are presenting the combination of self-critical humor and critique of the biases of Muslims in America, and such comedies are going very successful amongst the audiences. They are actually using humor as a platform to mention the issues affecting their religious groups and ethnicity. The study showed that the attitude of the viewer toward such comedies is positive and creating soft image in the minds of not only Muslims groups but also American viewers. The overall feedback on the sampled videos shows that videos are highly inspirational and supportive for enhancing the image of Muslims in world. Like on Negin Farsad comedy one of the viewers Sean Killion commented that "I'm glad Farsad did his best to dodge this whole trump hating thing good for him". It is evident from the comment that viewer think that Muslims are not haters like their image and they are the promoters of peace. Young (2004), Park (2006) er.al also explained that the comedians are able of presenting issues of race, gender, religion, in a very soft way. Hence create soft feeling in the minds of the viewers without annoying the audience. Baker (2008) also stated

that, all the comics from Middle Eastern side, they are actually using the humor to bring peace and harmony in world with Muslim community. Sorensen (2008) has even also stated that comedy is an influential technique of passive struggle to oppression in a different way than active struggle. Amarsingam (2008) also found that stand-up comedian have a big chance to communicate to public when they are there in light mood and having fun and unconsciously bringing soft image in the minds of the audiences. Hence comedians demonstrate throughout subtle things the optimistic part to which we are and then even more articulated things during their performance in comic shows, bringing positive and peaceful impact in perception of Muslims in world.

Conclusion

This study is an analysis of how humor is overshadowing Islamophobia in the world. Shortly after the attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, many Muslim comedians had to bear stereotypic and hate comments about them because of their Muslim identity. The results show that Muslim standup comedians are working in communication to help the Muslim society deal with the collision of the September 11 attacks and also to reduce the concept of Muslim Americans and Arab as threat to US and other world. Although religious scholars seldom take the cultural significance of comedies critically, presently a lot of confirmation that it is a significant social power. Muslim comedians believe that mistrust and fear for Muslim community can be countered by humor. Muslim stand-up comedy is a rare reaction to negative societal inequity after

9/11, and social critic's comedians argued the stereotype and reality of Muslim's life. It also explained that Muslim comedy affects not just Muslims but also non-Muslims.

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