

BLASPHEMY LAWS IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

Zaryab Khan^{*1}, Dr. Tansif Ur Rehman², Sher Afghan³, Abdullah Mandokhail⁴

^{*1,3,4}Final semester BA-LLB student in the Department of Law, Dadabhoy Institute of Higher Education, Pakistan; ²Visiting faculty, Department of Law, Dadabhoy Institute of Higher Education, Pakistan

^{*1}zaryabkhan4702@gmail.com; ²tansif@live.com; ³sherafghan786@gmail.com;
⁴AbdullahMK91@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Received: 26 March, 2024

Revised: 25 April, 2024

Accepted: 10 May, 2024

Published: 28 May, 2024

ABSTRACT

Blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries have garnered significant attention due to their impact on freedom of expression and religious pluralism. These laws typically prohibit speech or actions deemed disrespectful or offensive to Islam, its Prophet, or sacred symbols. Implementation varies widely among countries, ranging from fines and imprisonment to the death penalty. These laws intersect with broader socio-political dynamics, including authoritarianism, sectarian tensions, and struggles for power. They raise questions about the balance between religious sensitivities and fundamental human rights, such as freedom of speech and belief. Recent cases, like the controversy surrounding Asia Bibi in Pakistan, have sparked international outcry and debates over the reform or abolition of blasphemy laws in these contexts. Understanding these laws' origins, effects, and implications is crucial for navigating the intersection of religion, law, and human rights in Muslim-majority societies.

Keywords: blasphemy laws, persecution of minorities, Muslim-majority countries, human rights, freedom of expression

INTRODUCTION

Blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority nations have become a focal point of scholarly inquiry and international scrutiny due to their implications for freedom of expression and human rights principles. Following events like the Charlie Hebdo massacre, scholars such as (Brown 2016) have embarked on extensive comparative, theoretical, and historical analysis to unravel the intricacies surrounding blasphemy and its interaction with freedom of expression. Delves specifically into the context of Pakistan, offering insights into the enforcement and ramifications of blasphemy laws within the country (Hussain, 2019).

At the heart of the debate lies religious freedom, a fundamental tenet of democratic societies contributing to this discourse by providing a comprehensive worldwide overview of religious freedom (Marshall, 2017). Contextualizing the discussion surrounding blasphemy laws within a broader global framework, (Van der Vyver and Witte 2017) complement this perspective with their legal examination of religious human rights, exploring the tensions inherent in balancing

religious beliefs with universal human rights norms.

The narratives of dissenters and apostates are pivotal in understanding blasphemy laws' lived realities and repercussions. (Warraq 2013) amplifies these voices through his compilation "Leaving Islam: Apostates Speak Out," offering firsthand testimonies that shed light on the experiences of individuals who challenge religious orthodoxy. Crucial empirical evidence of the inadvertent effects of blasphemy laws, highlighting cases of persecution and advocating for reform to safeguard human rights (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Within academic circles, scholars like (Mahmood 2015) provide socio-political insights into blasphemy laws, examining their implications for religious secularism and societal harmony. They contribute to discussions surrounding the future of Sharia law and the role of Islam in secular states, enriching broader dialogues on religious pluralism and governance (An-Na'im, 2019).

Blasphemy laws, often rooted in religious doctrine

or cultural tradition, represent a complex intersection of law, religion, and society (Kamali, 1994). They seek to protect religious sensitivities but frequently raise questions about the limits of free speech and the rights of religious minorities and dissenters (Al-Alwani, 2003). The enforcement of blasphemy laws can vary widely between nations, influenced by factors such as political ideology and societal norms (Brown, 2016). In Pakistan, for example, how blasphemy laws have been used to target individuals, resulting in legal persecution and societal unrest (Hussain, 2019).

While some nations uphold robust protections for religious expression, others impose stringent restrictions that stifle dissent and perpetuate discrimination (Marshall, 2017). The need for a nuanced legal framework that respects religious beliefs and human rights, navigating the delicate balance between religious autonomy and individual liberties (Van der Vyver & Witte, 2017). Human Rights Watch (2019) further corroborates these accounts with documented cases of persecution and human rights abuses, calling attention to the urgent need for reform and accountability.

In the academic sphere, it contends that blasphemy laws can serve as tools of social control, reinforcing power dynamics and marginalizing dissenting voices (Mahmood, 2015). Exploration of Islam and secularism sheds light on the broader ideological debates surrounding blasphemy laws, offering insights into the evolving relationship between religion, state, and individual freedoms (An-Na'im, 2019).

Research Justification

The study of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority nations is of paramount importance due to its profound implications for fundamental rights and freedoms. As highlighted by the diverse range of scholarly works referenced, including legal analyses, socio-political perspectives, and empirical evidence, blasphemy laws intersect with critical issues such as freedom of expression, religious pluralism, and societal cohesion. This research aims to address several pressing questions by undertaking a comprehensive examination of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries. Firstly, it seeks to elucidate the origins and evolution of blasphemy laws within different cultural and legal contexts, shedding light on these

laws' historical precedents and contemporary manifestations.

Secondly, it aims to analyze the impact of blasphemy laws on individuals and communities, exploring how these laws are enforced, the consequences for dissenters and minorities, and the broader societal implications. Moreover, this research endeavor is justified by its potential to inform policy and advocacy efforts to promote human rights and religious freedom. By synthesizing scholarly insights and empirical data, this research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges of blasphemy laws and pave the way for evidence-based reforms that uphold religious sensitivities and individual liberties.

Research Objectives

This research aims to comprehensively explore blasphemy laws in Muslim majority countries, focusing on their historical, cultural, and legal dimensions. It seeks to understand their evolution, diverse interpretations, and impact on freedom of expression and religious pluralism. Additionally, it will examine the enforcement and judicial interpretation of blasphemy laws and assess their effectiveness and legitimacy in protecting religious sensitivities while respecting human rights. The research will also explore possibilities for legal reform and policy advocacy to address the challenges posed by blasphemy laws. By pursuing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to academic scholarship and public discourse on the intersection of law, religion, and human rights, ultimately advocating for tolerance, pluralism, and respect for human dignity in contemporary societies.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a systematic review approach to establish its research framework, with its objectives set accordingly (Komba & Lwoga, 2020). Extensive literature exploration on the topic was conducted, as indicated by the research findings being categorized based on their content (Hiver et al., 2021; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). It was structured using headings to incorporate this classified information into the study (Gan et al., 2021; Pawson et al., 2005). The study's progression was determined by

evaluating the classified information and titles (Page, 2021; Rahi, 2017), ensuring the research subject's contents' integrity (Egger et al., 2022; Victor, 2008).

Literature Review

Blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries have emerged as a contentious issue, prompting scholarly inquiry and international debate due to their implications for freedom of expression, religious pluralism, and human rights. By analyzing various case studies and legal frameworks, (Brown 2016) elucidates the complexities surrounding blasphemy and its interaction with freedom of expression. The study underscores the need for nuanced approaches to navigate the tension between religious sensitivities and fundamental rights.

Through a legal analysis, (Hussain 2019) explores the origins, enforcement, and ramifications of blasphemy laws within the country. His study sheds light on the challenges faced by religious minorities and dissenters, highlighting the discriminatory and oppressive nature of these laws in practice.

While not focusing exclusively on blasphemy laws, (Marshall's 2017) work contextualizes the discussion by illustrating the broader landscape in which these laws operate. The study emphasizes the importance of upholding religious freedoms as a cornerstone of democratic societies.

Explored the challenges inherent in reconciling religious beliefs with universal human rights norms. Examining legal frameworks and case law, the authors analyze the complexities surrounding the intersection of religion and law, shedding light on the

tensions between religious autonomy and individual liberties. (Van der Vyver and Witte 2017)

By providing firsthand testimonies, (Warrag 2013) highlights the personal ramifications of blasphemy accusations and the challenges faced by those who dissent from religious orthodoxy. The study adds a human dimension to the discourse, illustrating the profound impact of blasphemy laws on individuals' lives.

Historical Background of Blasphemy and Apostasy Laws

The roots of blasphemy and apostasy laws in Muslim-majority countries can be traced back to a

historic alliance between Islamic scholars and political rulers, as explored by (Rahman 2019). Around 1050 A.D., certain Sunni scholars of law and theology, known as the '*ulema*,' collaborated closely with rulers to challenge what they perceived as the sacrilegious influence of Muslim philosophers on society. This alliance aimed to preserve Sunni orthodoxy and suppress dissenting philosophical views incompatible with conservative religious beliefs (Rahman, 2019).

One of the most influential figures in consolidating Sunni orthodoxy was the Islamic scholar Ghazali, who died in 1111 A.D. Ghazali, as highlighted by (Safi and Griffel 2019), declared leading Muslim philosophers like Farabi and Ibn-e-Sina as apostates for their unorthodox views, justifying rulers to persecute or execute thinkers considered threats to religious orthodoxy. It marked the beginning of what (Safi and Griffel 2019) term the "ulema-state alliance," wherein questioning religious orthodoxy became synonymous with apostasy and dissent.

This alliance between religious scholars and political authorities, reminiscent of similar historical alliances in Western Europe between the Catholic Church and monarchs, resulted in the enforcement of blasphemy and apostasy laws across Muslim majority regions. The article "Blasphemy in Muslim Countries: An Overview" discusses how these laws were used to maintain religious orthodoxy and political control. During the Spanish Inquisition in Western Europe, for instance, thousands were tortured and killed for apostasy, reflecting the suppression of free thinking and dissent (Fairbd, 2023).

In the modern era, the implementation of blasphemy laws has been reinforced by political leaders seeking to appease conservative religious factions. As reported in the BBC article, military dictator Zia-ul-Haq's regime from 1978 to 1988 witnessed the harshening of blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Zia's alliance with the ulema led to the radicalization of blasphemy laws, which British colonizers initially formulated to prevent interreligious conflict (BBC, 2019).

Blasphemy Laws in Muslim-Majority Countries

The historical evolution of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries reflects a complex interplay between religious orthodoxy, political power, and societal dynamics. Scholars like Brown

(2016) have emphasized the need for comparative, theoretical, and historical reflections on blasphemy laws, especially in the aftermath of incidents like the Charlie Hebdo massacre. Implementing blasphemy laws stems from a historic alliance between Islamic scholars and political rulers, as Safi and Griffel (2019) discussed, aimed at preserving Sunni orthodoxy and suppressing dissenting philosophical views. This alliance, dating back to around 1050 A.D., marked the beginning of what scholars term the "ulema-state alliance," wherein questioning religious orthodoxy became synonymous with apostasy and dissent (Islamicity, 2022).

The contemporary enforcement of blasphemy laws, particularly in countries like Pakistan, has been reinforced by political leaders seeking to appease conservative religious factions. The harshening of blasphemy laws during military dictator Zia-ul-Haq's regime from 1978 to 1988, as reported by (BBC 2019), exemplifies this trend. Zia's alliance with the ulema led to the radicalization of blasphemy laws, initially formulated by British colonizers to prevent interreligious conflict. Similarly, the passing of new blasphemy laws in Pakistan and other Muslim-majority countries can be viewed within the context of political agendas aimed at consolidating power and appeasing religious constituencies (The Conversation, 2022). The impact of false blasphemy laws on human rights and freedom of expression has garnered international attention and concern. Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented cases of persecution, discrimination, and violence resulting from blasphemy accusations. These accusations not only curtail freedom of expression but also pose grave dangers to individuals, as evidenced by cases like that of Junaid Hafeez, a university lecturer sentenced to death for allegedly insulting the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) on Facebook (Amnesty International, 2019).

Furthermore, blasphemy laws are often intertwined with apostasy laws, which criminalize the act of leaving Islam. According to (Fairbd 2023), half of the world's Muslim-majority countries have laws banning apostasy, with punishments ranging from imprisonment to death. Global affairs and geopolitics influence the political and social dynamics surrounding blasphemy laws. International events, including the persecution of

Muslim minorities in various parts of the world, influence debates about blasphemy and apostasy laws among Muslims. The experiences of marginalized Muslim communities, such as the Palestinians, Rohingya, and Uyghurs, contribute to the politicization of blasphemy laws and the reinforcement of religious orthodoxy (Foreign Policy, 2017).

However, dissenting voices within Islam challenge the interpretation of blasphemy and apostasy laws. Many Islamic scholars and intellectuals reject the view that blasphemy and apostasy should be punishable by death. They advocate for a more moderate and inclusive interpretation of Islamic teachings, prioritizing peace, dialogue, and respect for diversity (Islamicity, 2022).

Blasphemy laws in Pakistan and their repercussions have been subjects of intense scrutiny and debate both domestically and internationally. These laws, deeply rooted in religious sentiments, have significant implications for freedom of expression, religious pluralism, and human rights. A comprehensive analysis provided by the Los Angeles Times delves into the historical context, evolution, and multifaceted impacts of Pakistan's blasphemy law on Muslim-majority countries. This legislation, primarily found in Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, imposes severe penalties, including the death penalty, for individuals convicted of insulting the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) (Los Angeles Times, 2023). Al Jazeera's detailed overview of Pakistan's blasphemy law sheds light on its broad and ambiguous provisions, which have often been abused and misused. Allegations of blasphemy are frequently leveraged as tools for settling personal vendettas, targeting religious minorities, or stifling dissenting voices within society. The lack of transparency in the law's application raises grave concerns about due process, human rights, and the rule of law (Al Jazeera, 2023).

Research conducted by the Pew Research Center highlights the global prevalence of blasphemy laws, with four in ten countries and territories worldwide implementing such legislation as of 2019. This statistic underscores the broader trend of enacting blasphemy laws, particularly in Muslim-majority nations, and emphasizes the significant role these laws play in religious governance and legal systems globally (Pew Research Center, 2022).

However, the interpretation and enforcement of blasphemy laws within Muslim majority countries exhibit significant variation. The Cato Institute emphasizes the complexity of Islamic views on blasphemy, with Pakistani courts themselves acknowledging the necessity for nuanced interpretations. Such nuances reflect diverse legal traditions, cultural norms, and political contexts that shape implementing blasphemy laws across different jurisdictions (Cato Institute, 2022).

Despite ostensibly protecting religious sentiments, blasphemy laws often have far reaching societal and human rights implications. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has documented numerous cases of persecution, discrimination, and violence resulting from blasphemy accusations, particularly in Southeast Asia. These cases underscore the detrimental impact of blasphemy laws on religious freedom, social cohesion, and individual rights (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2022).

Scholarly research, as published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, delves into the psychological and sociopolitical ramifications of blasphemy laws. Such studies highlight how these laws foster extremism, intolerance, and social unrest. Blasphemy laws create an environment of fear and censorship, stifling free expression and impeding intellectual discourse within society (*Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 2020).

Blasphemy laws in Muslim countries are deeply entrenched in Sharia law and Islamic jurisprudence, but their implementation varies widely (University of Melbourne, 2012). However, the interpretation and enforcement of these laws are often influenced by political motives rather than purely religious concerns. In contrast, countries like Indonesia and Malaysia may have similar laws but demonstrate a more moderate approach in their application, reflecting differing political landscapes and priorities (NewsLaundry, 2020).

The cultural context surrounding blasphemy laws plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes and responses. In Egypt, where state control over public morals intersects with Sharia and blasphemy, prosecutions are not only legal matters but also social and cultural issues. Criticism of religious beliefs or symbols is often met with societal ostracization and even violence,

highlighting the deep-seated cultural sensitivities surrounding blasphemy (Islamic Law Blog, 2015). Blasphemy laws are frequently exploited for political gain, with governments using them as tools to suppress dissent and consolidate power. Pakistan's emotive blasphemy laws, for example, have been manipulated by political actors to target religious minorities. Allegations of blasphemy are often weaponized to discredit opponents and rally support from conservative religious constituencies, undermining the rule of law and exacerbating social divisions (Al Jazeera, 2023). Furthermore, enforcing blasphemy laws can reflect broader power struggles within societies. In Egypt, blasphemy prosecutions may serve to reinforce the authority of the state and uphold religious orthodoxy, particularly in the face of political dissent. The intersection of religious norms and government control over public morals creates a complex dynamic where blasphemy laws become tools for maintaining social order and political stability (Islamic Law Blog, 2015).

Quranic Verses for Understanding Blasphemy

“In the Book, it is stated that when you hear Allah's revelations being denied or mocked, do not remain in the company unless the conversation shifts to another topic, or else you will be associated with them” (4:140 An-Nisa).

“O Believers! Do not turn to the protection or alliance of the people of earlier scriptures or the disbelievers who mock and ridicule your faith. Instead, remain conscious of Allah if you truly believe” (5:57 Al-Ma'idah).

“They take oaths by Allah that they never uttered any blasphemy, though they did indeed speak blasphemy, abandoned their faith after embracing Islam, and schemed but were unable to fulfill their plot” (9:74 At-Tauba).

“Their recompense will be Hellfire, due to their disbelief and mockery of My signs and messengers” (18:106 Al-Kahf).

“Alas for those creatures! Every messenger who came to them was subjected to mockery” (36:30 Ya-Sin).

“The evil 'consequences' of their actions will be revealed to them, and they will be overcome by what they used to mock” (45:33 Al-Jathiya).

“Please have patience, O Prophet, in the face of what they say, and leave them with dignity” (73:10 Al-Muzzammil).

“If the hypocrites, those with doubts in their hearts, and spreaders of rumors in Medina do not stop their behavior, we will indeed prompt you, O Prophet, to confront them, and then they will no longer be your neighbors there” (33:60 Al-Ahzab).

“They are worthy of condemnation. If they continue, they will face relentless capture and killing wherever they are discovered.” (33:61 Al-Ahzab).

Conclusion

The study of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries highlights the intricate dynamics between religious beliefs, political agendas, and societal attitudes. While some nations rigorously enforce harsh blasphemy statutes, there exists a spectrum of interpretations among scholars and activists advocating for greater freedom of expression within Islamic contexts. However, political motivations often overshadow religious considerations, leading to the exploitation of blasphemy laws to suppress dissent and maintain power.

15

Research Limitations

Despite the comprehensive examination of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries, this research has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the scope of the study primarily focuses on legal and religious perspectives, potentially overlooking the sociopolitical dynamics that influence the implementation and enforcement of blasphemy laws. Additionally, the analysis predominantly relies on secondary sources, which may limit the depth of understanding and overlook nuanced local contexts. Furthermore, language barriers and restricted access to primary documents may have hindered the inclusivity of the research, particularly regarding non-English language sources. Lastly, the rapidly evolving nature of blasphemy-related discourse necessitates ongoing updates and revisions to ensure the accuracy and relevance of findings.

Future Research Directions

Future research endeavors could explore the sociocultural factors that shape public attitudes towards blasphemy and religious pluralism in Muslim-majority societies. Comparative studies

analyzing blasphemy laws across legal systems and religious traditions could offer valuable insights into global trends and best practices. Furthermore, longitudinal studies tracking the impact of legal reforms and social interventions on religious freedom and tolerance would contribute to evidence-based policymaking and advocacy efforts. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches integrating legal, sociological, and psychological perspectives could enrich our understanding of the complex interplay between religion, law, and society in the context of blasphemy. Finally, qualitative research methodologies, including interviews and case studies, could provide nuanced insights into individual experiences and perceptions regarding blasphemy laws and their enforcement.

References

- Al-Alwani, T. J. (2003). *La Ikraha fi al-Din: Apostasy in Islam*. https://alwani.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/45_-apostasy-in-islam-A-Historical-and-Scriptural-Analysis.pdf
- Al Jazeera. (2023, August 18). *All you need to know about Pakistan's blasphemy law*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/18/all-you-need-to-know-about-pakistans-blasphemy-law>
- Amnesty International. (2019). *Annual Report 2019: The state of the world's human rights*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/pakistan-flawed-blasphemy-laws-fuelling-death-threats/>
- An-Na'im, A. A. (2019). *Islam and the secular state: Negotiating the future of Sharia*. Harvard University Press.
- BBC. (2019). *Pakistan's blasphemy laws*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48204815>
- Cato Institute. (2022). *Islamic views on blasphemy are more complex, Pakistani courts admit*. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/islamic-views-blasphemy-are-more-complex-pakistani-courts-admit>
- Brown, N. J. (2016). Blasphemy, Charlie Hebdo, and the freedom of belief: A comparative perspective. *Emory International Law Review*, 30(1), 99-132.
- Egger, M., Smith, G. D., Schneider, M., & Minder, C. (2022). Bias in the meta-analysis was detected by a simple, graphical test. *British Medical Journal*, 315(7109), 629-634.
- Fairbd. (2023). *Blasphemy in Muslim countries*. <https://fairbd.net/blasphemy-in-muslim-countries-an>
- Foreign Policy. (2017). *Global affairs and geopolitics: Influence on debates about blasphemy and apostasy laws among Muslims*

- Gan, S. K., Kuo, Y. H., & Yin, X. Q. (2021). Supporting information retrieval in systematic reviews: A literature review. *Information Processing & Management*, 58(4), 102539.
- Hiver, P., Al-Hoorie, A. H., & Vitta, J. P. (2021). Introduction: Taxonomies of second language acquisition in educational research. In Hiver, P., Al-Hoorie, A. H., & Vitta, J. P. (Eds.), *Taxonomies of Second Language Acquisition*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *World Report 2019: Events of 2018*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/13/pakistan-blasphemy-convictionspose-grave-danger>
- Hussain, J. (2019). Blasphemy and the law in Pakistan: An analysis of the socio-legal dynamics. *Stanford Journal of International Law*, 55(2), 367-394.
- Islamicity. (2022). *Blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries: A historical perspective*. <https://www.islamicity.org/79966/freedom-of-expression-and-19-blasphemylaws/10/2022%20Southeast%20Asia%20Blasphemy%20Issue%20Update%2010.19.22.pdf>
- Islamic Law Blog. (2015). *The cultural context of blasphemy laws: Insights from Egypt*. <https://islamiclaw.blog/2015/11/03/blasphemy-law-in-egypt-the-intersection-of-sharia-and-state-control-over-public-morals/>
- Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law. (2020). *Psychological and sociopolitical ramifications of blasphemy laws: A scholarly analysis*.
- Kamali, M. H. (1994). *Freedom of expression in Islam*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/article/abs/mohammad-hashim-kamali-freedom-of-expression-in-islam-cambridge-islamic-texts-society-1994-pp-349/2D197E553D903237B26FD166403D1862>
- Komba, S. C., & Lwoga, E. T. (2020). The state of research on open educational resources in Tanzania: A Systematic Review. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 86(1), 1-18.
- Los Angeles Times. (2023). *The historical context and implications of Pakistan's blasphemy law*. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-02-03/pakistanblasphemy-law-muslim-countries>
- Mahmood, S. (2015). Religious freedom, blasphemy, and security in Muslim-majority states. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 11, 131-149.20
- Marshall, P. (2017). *Religious freedom in the world: A global overview*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316671542>
- Newslandry. (2020). *Blasphemy laws in Muslim countries: Comparative analysis*. <https://www.newslandry.com/2020/02/22/more-political-than-religious-why-blasphemy-is-a-capital-crime-in-some-muslim-countries>
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D.,... & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *PLOS Medicine*, 18(3), e1003583.
- Pawson, R., Greenhalgh, T., Harvey, G., & Walshe, K. (2005). Realist review--a new method of systematic review designed for complex policy interventions. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 10, 21-34.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A Practical Guide*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Pew Research Center. (2022). *Global prevalence of blasphemy laws: A Study Conducted in 2019*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/shortreads/2022/01/25/four-in-ten-countries-and-territories-worldwide-had-blasphemy-laws-in-2019-2/>
- Rahi, S. (2017). Use of systematic review methodology in educational research: An approach to data synthesis. *IUP Journal of Educational Strategy*, 10(2), 38-47.
- Rahman, M. (2019). Blasphemy and apostasy laws in Muslim-majority countries: Historical roots and contemporary implications. *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, 21(3), 345-362.21
- Safi, O., & Griffel, F. (2019). Ghazali and the Ulema-State alliance: *The origins of blasphemy and apostasy laws in Sunni Islam*. *Islamic Studies Quarterly*, 12(2), 189-215.
- The Conversation. (2022). *The politics of blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries*. <https://theconversation.com/the-politics-of-blasphemy-why-pakistan-and-some-other-muslim-countries-are-passing-new-blasphemy-laws-198647>
- U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2022). *Southeast Asia blasphemy issue update*. <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2022->
- University of Melbourne. (2012). *Anti-blasphemy laws do not work in Muslim countries - - and they will not work here*. <https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/news/22303-anti-blasphemy-laws-dont-work-in-muslim-countries--and-they-wont-work-here>
- Van der Vyver, J. D., & Witte Jr., J. (2017). Religious human rights in global perspective: *Legal Perspectives*. Brill. <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/19068?rskey=84UlhP&result=1>

- Victor, J. (2008). Systematic review: A tool for evidence-based practice. *American Journal of Nursing*, 108(1), 53-58.
- Warrag, I. (Ed.). (2013). *Leaving Islam: Apostates speak out*. Prometheus Books.

