

A Pragmatic Analysis of Fallacies in English Religious Argumentative Discourse

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ABSTRACT:

Fallacies are common errors in an argument and they undermine the logic of that argument. They obstruct the process of argumentation since they do not contribute to the resolution in difference in opinion. The current study investigates fallacies in four religious argumentative debates between Muslims and atheists. It adopts Toulmin et al (1984) as a model for analysis. Results show that both debating parties, Muslims and atheists commit fallacies but the latter exceeds the former quantitatively and qualitatively. The most common fallacies in Muslims' arguments are straw man argument, poisoning the well and attacking the person whereas the straw man argument, argument from ignorance, hasty generalization and appeal to compassion are the most committed ones by atheists.

Keywords: Fallacies, Straw man, Argument from ignorance, red herring, The argument against the person

1. Introduction

Fallacies are wrong moves in argumentation. They result from invalid or faulty reasoning. While some of them are committed unintentionally, others are done on purpose. Fallacies have been explored by some researchers, yet these studies have some flaws. For example, most of them focus on providing a theoretical literature review on most models in fallacies and they do not show and empirically how to identify fallacies. Many specialists in the field assert that fallacies are hard to identify even to those to whom the argument is directed. Therefore, it seems that fallacies are not given due attention in spite of their importance to argumentative discourse in particular and linguistic or pragmatic studies in general. Thus, the current study attempts to add more to this a bit neglected area of study. Furthermore, all existing studies on fallacies are concerned with politicians' language. The present study is distinct from others in a number of respects. First, it is concerned with religious debates that have not been explored, to the best of our knowledge. Second, argumentation in the data under study is different from that in other studies in the sense that there are two debaters from two different sides whereas in the other studies the data do not take

the form of argumentation in the full sense since they are speeches from one side only to a silent audience whose role is only a receiver.

Accordingly, the present study looks for answers for the following questions:

1. What are the most common fallacies committed by Muslims?
2. What are the most common fallacies committed by atheists?
3. Which party is more likely to commit fallacies?
4. Which type of fallacies is more prevalent in Muslims' arguments?
5. Which type of fallacies is more dominant in atheists' arguments ?

2. Fallacies : Literature Review

Despite the fact that most arguers do their best to present their arguments in a reasonable and rational way, some arguments go wrong. Human reason is not perfect in the same way as their physical level. These wrong and imperfect arguments are called fallacies (Tindale, 2007, p.14-15). Hence, fallacies are speech acts that are intended to resolve the dispute but actually they hinder it. They are considered as violations to the rules of discussion since they take arguers away from their goals in settling down the debate (van Eemeren and Grootendorst,1983,p.151). The word "fallacy" comes originally from Latin and it means "to deceive" or "deceitful". Fallacies are deceitful because they have the features of good arguments despite the fact that they are illogical and they lack what good arguments have. Consequently, fallacies often mislead audience and they are not easily tracked or identified by those engaged in the debate themselves. They may be accidental or deliberate, either honest or dishonest mistakes (Toulmin et al, 1984,p.132). Whether being intentional or unintentional, a mistake is a mistake regardless of the intention of the arguer (Damer,2009, p.52).Some arguers use fallacies in their arguments intentionally in order to appeal to their audience's emotions and to exploit their knowledge of something in the way that serves their intentions. Freeley and Steinberg (2008,p.189) add that arguments that are considered to be fallacious in one context may not be so in another context .

2.1 Types of Fallacies

Toulmin et al (1984,p.139-167) identify five types of fallacies:

- 1 . Fallacies that result from missing grounds;
2. Fallacies that result from irrelevant grounds;
3. Fallacies that result from defective grounds;
4. Fallacies that result from unwarranted assumptions; and
5. Fallacies that result from ambiguities in our arguments.

Each type is subdivided into a number of fallacies.

2.1.1 Fallacies resulting missing Grounds

An argument that lacks grounds is one that misses a reason for supporting its posited claim. This type of argument is called sometimes pseudo-argument. Probably the most common fallacy of this type is begging the question.

2.1.1.1 Begging the Question

An arguer commits the fallacy of begging the question when he presents grounds which are equivalent to the claim itself. In other words, he states a claim and then reformulates it in another way and presents it as grounds. In the following example:

A: Smith is telling the truth.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: He wouldn't lie to me about this.

The speaker posits a claim which states that “Mr. Smith is telling the truth”. When he is asked for reason or the grounds that backs his claim, he merely paraphrased his first proposition and produces a similar one “ he wouldn't lie to me on this”. He does not provide grounds but rather restate the claim itself in another way (Toulmin et al 1984,p.135).

2.1.2 Fallacies resulting from irrelevant grounds

In spite of the fact that some arguments are fallacious because they lack grounds, there are others that are described as fallacious because they advance irrelevant grounds for their claims. These fallacies are identified when arguers provide evidence that does not directly support the claim (Toulmin et al,1984,p139).

2.1.2.1 Evading the Issue

This fallacy is identified when a debater provides irrelevant evidence to his claim. This can be done in a number of ways. A discussant may present incorrect evidence; he may advance an evidence that is not directly relevant to the claim or the issue under discussion; he may sidestep the issue by following elusive strategies, that's a discussant prefers to evade a question directed to him (ibid.,140).

Two important types of this type of fallacy are the *red herring* and the *straw man*. A fallacy of red herring occurs when an arguer misdirect the discussion into another way by introducing a topic which is not relevant to the claim under investigation. The straw-man argument is another tactic in which a debater attacks a claim that his opponent has not raised at all. In a straw man argument, the debater normally oversimplifies things to achieve his aim. Although a straw man and a red herring might seem alike, they are distinct from each other. In in the red herring argument, the arguer distracts his opponent by introducing unrelated, irrelevant topic into the discussion. That's a red herring takes the whole discussion away from the main issue. In the straw man argument, the debater twists the argument into new simplified one that is easily defeated. He restates his opponent's claim in a way that makes it refutable by weakening it. For example, in a discussion about abortion, one arguer may claim that it is illegal. The other arguer may also claim that murder is illegal to get the agreement of his opponent. When the latter gets the agreement of the former that murder should be illegal, the latter may state that abortion is also illegal. In other words, an arguer evades the main issue by building a straw man that is easily blown over (Toulmin et al,1984,p.142).

2.1.2.2 Appeals to authority

Appeal to authority is a common fallacy where a discussion is closed off and the last word is left to authority. The discussion is condemned as fallacious where authority is called upon to end an issue that is still controversial and requires more evidence. Whether being satisfied or not the discussion is settled by authority not reason. An example of appeals to authority is identified when a group of Aristotelian scientists reject any kind of verification to any scientific statement suggested by Aristotle. Another common example about appeal to authority in our everyday life is identified when people take for granted what celebrities, athletes or film stars say in advertisements. People are convinced by their allegations without any negotiation or any intention to look for truth or evidence (Toulmin,1984,p.142).

2.1.2.3 The argument against the person(*argumentum ad hominem*)

When controversial issues are debated, we often expect clashing between opponents. Attacking each other in abusive way is dominant. The fallacy against the person or ad hominem occurs when the criticism is directed towards the arguer himself and not towards his argument (Tindale,2007,p.81). In ad hominem, the argument is challenged and rejected not because of its content but because of arguer who presents it.

In argumentative discourse, the argument itself should be estimated not the arguer. It is very important to differentiate between someone's *argument* and *testimony*. For instance, if someone is known as a liar or psychotic is being questioned as a witness, this will affect the reliability of his testimony and how he relates events. Yet, if the liar or the psychotic introduces an argument, his argument has to be evaluated regardless of its producer. An argument must stand by its own independently and it has nothing to do with the speaker's position or character. This ensures that the debate will have a high degree of credibility. Ad hominem fallacy occurs when one arguer issues a personal attack against his opponent and at the same time ignoring and discrediting his argument (Damer ,2009,p.198).

2.1.2.4 The argument from ignorance (*Argumentum Ad Ignorantiam*)

The argument from ignorance is a fallacy that arguers are liable to make when mistakenly make claims from the opposite and believe that these claim can work in the context of discussion. For example, an outdated atheists cliché is that they conclude that God does not exist because they cannot prove his existence. This lack of proofs or evidence lessens the probability of God's existence (according to them). If something has not been proved, this does not warrant us to infer anything (ibid.,145).

2.1.2.5 The appeal to the people

The appeal to the people is a fallacy where a claim becomes defeasible and unnegotiable merely because of its popularity. This means that when a group of people hold a belief collectively, it will be considered as a true evidence and it is not allowed to bring it into question. Advertisers might use this tactic to convince people to buy their products not because their products are good but simply because many people have bought this product and thus it acquires popularity. Politicians may also resort to this

kind of fallacy when they encourage their people to approve their taxation system. They may win the approval of their people by saying that real patriotic people used to withstand any kind of economic tightening for the glory of their country (ibid.,146).

2.1.2.6 The appeal to compassion

The appeal to compassion is an alternative to a fallacious referred to as "sob stories". Sob stories are not necessarily fallacious. They acquire the feature fallaciousness because they obscure an issue. The appeal to compassion is an argument that plays upon the feelings of the audience. The arguer makes use of people sympathy in situations where rational decisions must be taken and no place for emotions must be there. In defending criminals, lawyers normally resort to this strategy to convince the jurors that their clients are innocent or at least to lessen their punishments. For example, a lawyer might state that a criminal should not be punished severely because he has led a miserable life full of deprivation and agony. In this appeal, a lawyer might construct a warrant or a generalization that states that a criminal who has lived a miserable life should not be punished severely (ibid.,147).

2.1.2.7 The appeal to force

An appeal to force results in compliance rather than conviction in the addressee. Such kind of appeals is a threat in the first place which implicates that the hearer will be hurt in a way or another unless he agrees to the content of the claim (Toulmin et al,1984,p.148).

2.1.3 Fallacies resulting from defective grounds

Grounds introduced to support a given claim might be relevant but insufficient. Three types are identified and they are presented below (ibid.,151).

2.1.3 .1 Hasty generalization

Hasty generalization refers to the case where an arguer directly jumps to conclusions. Debaters make the fallacy of hasty generalization when they draw a general conclusion from too few instances or from untypical examples. Thus, arguers jump to conclusions when they pick insufficient samples or make generalizations out of atypical cases (ibid.,151).

2.1.3 .2 Accident

The fallacy of accident is identified when an arguer bases his claim on a general rule but does not recognize the exception upon which this case may fall. This means that the arguer knows the rule but not the exception. Therefore, accident is the converse fallacy of hasty generalization. In the case of hasty generalization, debaters do not provide adequate grounds for their claims or they base their claims on atypical or make generalizations out of few instances. That's their grounds are defective because they are insufficient. On the contrary, in the case of fallacy of accident, grounds are defective because arguers do not consider some specific cases or exceptions that make a general rule inapplicable (ibid.,154).

2.1.4 Fallacies of unwarranted assumption

Fallacies of unwarranted assumption are identified when an arguer moves from the grounds to claim without providing an explicit warrant assuming that it is known and shared by all members but the fact that this warrant is not commonly accepted (Toulmin et al, 1984,p.157).

2.1.4.1 Complex question

Fallacies of complex question occur when a debater poses a question that cannot be answered by one answer. For example, a complex question like "Have you ceased to abuse drugs?", cannot be answered by a single response. Like all complex questions, one cannot answer it without inculpating himself. If the answer is "yes" or "no", he has confessed doing something wrong. Hence, the one who asks the question is putting words in the mouth of the addressee. Another classic example that shows a complex question is that is "Have you stopped beating your wife?" (ibid.,157).

2.1.4. 2 False cause

The fallacy of false cause takes place into cases. First, when an arguer mixes temporal succession with causal sequence. In other words, an arguer considers one event to be a cause simply because it takes place before the other. Second, when an arguer wrongly considers one event to be the cause of another.

2.1.4.3 False analogy

Analogies are linguistic devices that are intended by the producer of the text, the speaker or the writer, to enable his audience, the hearer or the reader, to visualize the image depicted by him. Analogies are effective when they are used by the speaker successfully and they take the form of metaphors or similes. There is no type of argument more vulnerable to fallacy than analogies. " For example, the likening of the lion to a king in the phrase "king of beasts" or the German 2nd World War commander Field Marshal Erwin Rommel to a fox in the nickname "The Desert Fox."

All these analogies are workable in given contexts. However, they are not applicable all the time. In other words, false analogy is yielded when an arguer make inappropriate comparison (Toulmin et al,184,p.161).

2.1.4.4 Poisoning the well

Originally the term *poisoning the well* is taken from old narrative stories where an enemy poison a well, destroys it so that the well is no longer usable. It has been spoiled, poisoned and tainted. When an arguer manipulates this strategy, he puts his opponent in a situation that he would not be able to defend himself without making things worse (Gula,2007,p.58).

Poisoning the well is a variety of *argumentum ad hominem* fallacy.

It is typified by the fact that one party assumes that his opponent is being biased and he has some interests that deems him to be a source of credibility. The first party urges the audience as the third party not to believe what his opponent is going to say in the forthcoming discussion. He adheres to a particular view that serves a party or an organization therefore; he is unreliable (Walton,1998,p.14). It is a tactic that one arguer uses to silence his opponent by inappropriately blocking and shutting down

his attempt to present arguments (Walton,2006,p.273). For example, Walton (1987,p217) provides his *abortion example* to explain this kind of fallacy:

I wish it were possible for men to get really emotionally involved in this question. It is really impossible for the man, for whom it is impossible to be in this situation, to really see it from the woman's point of view. That is why I am concerned that there are not more women in this House available to speak about this from the woman's point of view.

In this example, the *well has been poisoned* by the speaker, that's he suggests that what his opponent is going to say is discredited simply because he is a male and not a female. He is not in position to say things that are inaccessible to him and thus, anything he might say represents a limited and a biased viewpoint.

Ad hominem is different from poisoning the well in three aspects. First, poisoning the well does not necessarily mean attacking the other party personally. For instance, an arguer may start his argument by criticizing the topic itself not his opponent by saying "It's stupid to talk about this topic,...".The arguer poisons the well by making the topic insignificant though it might be important to other participants. Second, poisoning the well is a tactic used by an arguer to judge upcoming future discussion negatively, that's he criticizes the arguer before he begins his argument. In ad hominem, an arguer attacks his opponent personally and during the process of argumentation. Thus, the former is presumptive whereas the latter is disruptive. Finally, in poisoning the well, an arguer is addressing a third party(for example, the audience) telling them that his opponent has nothing worthy to present while in ad hominem, an arguer is addressing and attacking his opponent personally(<https://www.quora.com/How-is-the-ad-hominem-fallacy-different-from-poisoning-the-well>) .

2.1.5 Fallacies resulting from ambiguities

Ambiguity is a pervasive phenomenon in language. Any linguistic unit whether being a sentence, a phrase or a word is ambiguous when it has two or more readings or interpretations. Many words in the dictionary can be understood in two or more senses. For instance the word "pen" can refer to a tool for writing, a place for keeping animals or to a prison. However, the word "pen" is not problematic as its meaning can easily be recognized from the context. But the case is different with a phrase like "private interests" in politics. It may refer to "desires" or "needs" of a particular group. Thus, in a political argument, where no clear distinction is made between the two senses , misunderstanding is certainly expected to arise in the course of discussion. In what follows a number of fallacies resulting from ambiguity are mentioned (Toulmin et al ,1984,p.168).

2.1.5.1 Equivocation

The fallacy of equivocation occurs when an arguer uses the same word in two different senses in one argument. An arguer should adhere to one sense of a word within one argument otherwise he will confuse his opponent. Words and phrases should maintain the same meaning during the

ongoing discussion, unless a transition in meaning is understood or specified. When an arguer equivocates in the middle of an argument, his opponent will face difficulty in detecting his intention and thus leading him to draw unwarranted conclusion (Damer,2009,p.121).In the following example, the word "pitcher" has been used in two different senses. "*This team needs a new pitcher. So go and get one from off the shelf in the kitchen!*". The speaker shifts from one sense to another in the mid of an argument and thus, he is making pun and committing a fallacy of equivocation (Toulmin,1984,p.168).

2.1.5.2 Amphiboly

In the fallacy of amphiboly, ambiguity arises from the structure of the sentence. The words themselves are unambiguous but putting them in a particular sentence structure renders the sentence ambiguous. For example, omission or misplacing punctuation marks like comma or full stop makes a radical change in meaning (Toulmin et al,1984,p.169). Many puns in comedic plays make use of this kind of ambiguity to create certain humorous effects(Tindale,2007,p.59).Advertisement and instruction manuals also contain this type of ambiguities (Toulmin et al, 1984,p.169). Thus, amphiboly is a syntactic ambiguity which results from a careless positioning of punctuation marks. Some grammatical errors that lead to ambiguous constructions are: *unclear pronoun reference* ("Fred never argues with his father when *he* is drunk"); *elliptical construction*, where some words are omitted but their meanings are recovered ("Susie loves teaching more than her husband"); *unclear modifier* ("I have to take my makeup test in an hour"); *careless use of "only"* (sign on a pump at gasoline station: "We *only* accept American Express Travelers Checks"); and *careless use of "all"* ("*all* of the fish Doug caught weigh six pounds or more").

Syntactic ambiguity can be differentiated from semantic ambiguity in that it can be resolved by reformulating the sentence again not by not by the clarification of the meaning of a word (Damer,2009,p.123).

2.1.5.3 Accent

The fallacy of accent occurs when the speaker accentuates certain portions in his utterance. As a result the addressee would be misled and he would draw incorrect conclusions. The meaning of the sentence varies depending on which parts of the sentence are emphasized. Thus, accentuating different parts of the sentence yields different interpretations. This fallacy is sometimes committed by extracting particular parts out of their context in a way that gives an unintended meaning. The fallacy of accent occurs in advertisements and newspapers headlines and everyday discourse as well. It renders the reader or the hearer to make unwarranted conclusions and thus be misled. For example, a father is complaining about raising his three children and said about his eldest daughter " **SHE** won't listen to me" (with the emphasis on "She"), the hearer might infer that his eldest daughter is the only troublesome one and that the other two children are obedient and listen to him. Another example is when a professor A calls his student B and asks her to tell her roommate, C, that he will not

accept her paper if she does not turn in her paper that day. B reports the story to her friend C but she extracts the portion “he will no longer accept her paper.” out of the whole sentence leaving out the most essential part of the sentence, “if she does not turn in her paper.” Now, C draws a very different conclusion that the professor will not accept her paper at all. If B conveys the message as a whole without omitting if clause, C would probably understand that she still gets time to send her paper to her professor (Damer,2009,p.127).

2.1.5.4 Composition

The fallacy of composition occurs when an arguer assumes that what is true of the parts of a whole can be true of the whole. In spite of the fact that this presumption can be sometimes true, it leads to unwarranted conclusions. For example, if one assumes that each player in a certain football team is excellent player, this would not warrant him to infer that the football team is an excellent one. Having a number of professional players gathered into one team may not necessarily yield an excellent team if their skills are not effectively and harmonically meshed.

One cannot assign to a whole those features that are assigned to each of its constituents. The reason is that when a number of constituents are blended with each other, they interact or influence each other and change the character of the whole (Damer,2009,p.140).

The fallacy of composition should not be confused with the fallacy of hasty generalization (mentioned above) because the latter occurs when an arguer draws conclusions from few instances, that's it has to do inadequate evidence " *One swallow does not indicate the advent of summer*". The fallacy of composition occurs when a debater draws conclusion about the characteristics of the whole based on the characteristics of each of its parts (ibid.,141).

Toulmin et al(1984,p. 172) provide a good example that explains the fallacy of composition:

C: Sodium chloride must be poisonous.

G: Its two constituents, sodium and chlorine, are both of them deadly poisons.

This argument depends on the warrant:

W: What is true of the constituents of a chemical compound is true of the compound.

Having a look on the premises above, we arrive at unwarranted conclusion. Although the substances from which the compound, sodium chlorine is composed, are both poisonous, the sodium chlorine is not poisonous. In fact, the resulted chemical compound, sodium chlorine, is salt. This argument is fallacious because what is true of the parts is not true of the whole.

2.1.5.5 Division

Another fallacy of ambiguity is fallacy of division. It is closely related to the fallacy of composition as they represent two phases of the same coin, that's to say it is the opposite of it. The fallacy of composition is identified when a discussant assumes that the characteristics attributed to

the parts of the whole can be attributed to the whole. On the contrary, the fallacy of the division occurs when one assumes that what is true about the whole can be true about the parts (Damer,2009,p.142).

Making generalization about a member who belongs to a group on the bases of the characteristics of that group is another way of committing the fallacy of division. In this case the characteristics of the whole is inapplicable to the parts because this characteristic is simply a generalization of based on the characteristics of most members in that group but not all of them. Thus, it is fallacious to apply a characteristic of most members of the group to all members since it is only applicable to most members. The implicit premise in the fallacy of division involves this unwarranted assumption, therefore it is an unacceptable (Damer,2009,p.142).

The same example of the sodium chlorine (cited above) can explain the fallacy of division. For example, if one argues that both elementary substances, sodium and chlorine that interact with each other to produce sodium chlorine, must be edible based on the ground that sodium chlorine is edible, he is committing the fallacy of division. That is the characteristics of the whole is inapplicable to the parts. Thus, in the fallacy of division the grounds are true but the claim is false (Toulmin et al ,1984,p.172).

2.1.5.6 Figure of Speech

The fallacy of figure of speech occurs when one assumes that grammatical or morphological similarities between words denote similarities in meaning. A classic example of this fallacy is made by John Stuart Mill's essay on "Utilitarianism", where Mill assumes that since what is audible can be heard, what is visible can be seen ,thus what is "desirable" can be desired. Mill committed the fallacy of figure of speech because "desirable" means an object that ought to be desired since he uses it as similar to audible and visible. Another good example about the fallacy of figure of speech is the word "inflammable" which may also give rise to the this kind of fallacy. Language users may confuse the prefix of negation "in" since "ineligible" means "not eligible" and "incontestable" means " not contestable"; therefore, inflammable appears as if it means "not flammable" (in French, it means so). Another problematic prefix is "in" that indicates the meaning of "thoroughly". For example, the prefix "in" in the word "invaluable" is used to intensify the meaning of the adjective. Thus, the word "inflammable" means "highly "flammable". Another variety of the fallacy of figure of speech occurs when one assumes that a noun represents a thing or an object. Nouns stand for collective entities like *team* and *army* or relationships like *marriage*. They do not only indicate persons, places and things. Nouns are used to refer to abstract concepts that do not exist or they do not have a physical or tangible entity. A humorous example is Gilbert Ryle's imaginary visitor to Oxford University, who visits all the colleges that make up Oxford and asks at the end, "But where is the university?"(Toulmin, 1984,p. 172).

3. Methodology

This section is devoted to explain the methodological framework of the current study. It introduces the model adopted in the analysis, the scoring scheme followed in obtaining the results and a summarized description of the data under investigation.

3.1. Instrument

The current study adopts Toulmin's et al (1984) as a model for analyzing the data.

3.2 Scoring Scheme

In addition to calculating frequencies and percentages of fallacies for both debating parties, Chi-square test is also applied to find out whether there is any significant difference between Muslims and atheists in committing fallacies. Chi-square test is a statistical tool used to find out whether there is a relationship between the expected frequencies (E) and the observed frequencies (O) within one or more groups. It can be used to find out whether there is a significant difference between two or more groups of population (Larson, 2008,p.207).

The Chi-square value is calculated by summing the difference between the observed (O) and the expected (E) score (and squaring it so no negative numbers arise) and then dividing the result by the expected score:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

where O is the Observed Frequency in each category

E is the Expected Frequency in the corresponding category

χ^2 is Chi Square value (Larson- Hall, 2010:206-208).

3.3 Data Analysis

The data of the present study are spoken argumentative discourse taken from four debates between Muslims and atheists. They are transcribed and transformed into written texts. Then, they are analyzed according to Toulmin et al (1984) model.

4. Results and Discussion

This section is devoted to present the results of data analysis quantitatively and qualitatively.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The findings of data analysis indicate that fallacies are committed by both teams, Muslims and atheists. As far as Muslims' arguments are concerned, six fallacies occur in the four debates under study. They are *attacking the person* (*ad hominem*) fallacy (50%), *poisoning the well* (33.33%) and *straw man* argument (16.66%).

Atheists, on the other hand, show more variance in committing fallacies qualitatively and quantitatively as they commit eleven fallacies distributed along the four debates. The fallacy of *argument from ignorance* (*ad ignorantiam*) is located at the top of the pyramid as it occurs (5) times which corresponds to (50%). Next, there is the fallacy of *hasty generalization* and *straw man argument* with (2) instances each which is equivalent to (20%) each. Then, there is *fallacy of compassion* which occurs once and occupies (10%).

The figure below shows the percentages of committing fallacies in Muslims and atheists arguments.

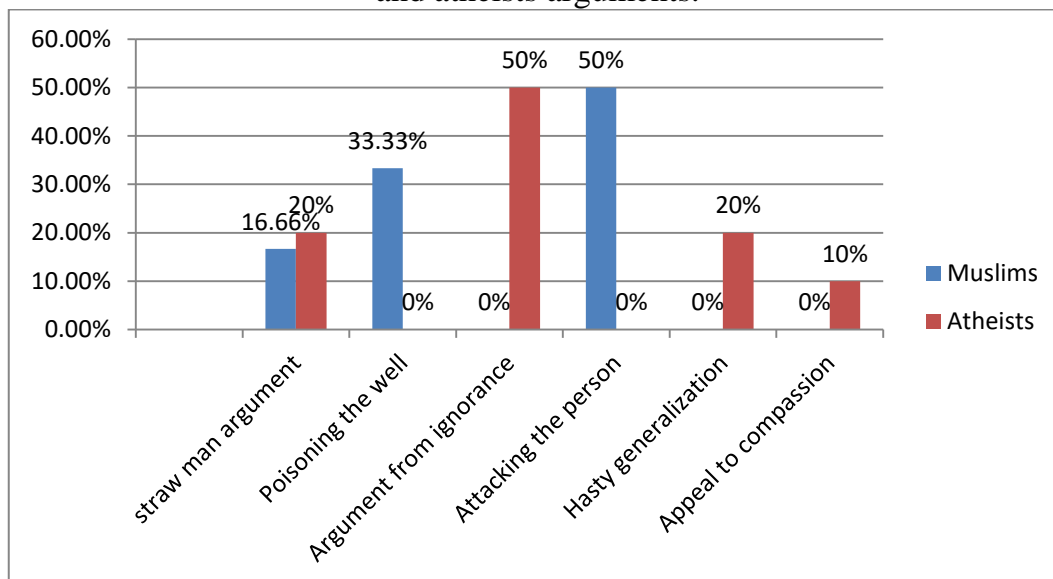


Figure (1) Fallacies Committed by Muslims and Atheists

To conclude, Muslim debaters commit fallacies that arise from irrelevant grounds and unwarranted assumption while atheists commit fallacies that result from irrelevant grounds and defective grounds

For more details on the frequencies and percentages of the type and the sub-type of the committed fallacies, the table below is provided.

Table (1)Frequencies and Percentages of Fallacies in Muslims and Atheists’ Arguments

	Fallacies resulting from Irrelevant grounds		Fallacies resulting from unwarranted assumption		Fallacies resulting from Irrelevant grounds		Fallacies resulting from Irrelevant grounds		Fallacies resulting from defective grounds		Fallacies resulting from Irrelevant grounds		TOTAL	
	FR EQ.	PER.	FR EQ.	PER.	FR EQ.	PER.	FR EQ.	PER.	FR EQ.	PER.	FR EQ.	PER.		
MUS	1	16.66%	2	33.33%			3	50%					6	100%
ATHS	2	20%			5	50%			2	20%	1	10%	10	100%

MUS= Muslims, ATHS= Atheists, Frequency, PER= Percentage

In order to find whether there is a statistical significant difference between Muslims and atheists in committing fallacies, Chi-square test is applied. It has been found that the computed value of Chi-square test is (1) which is lower than the tabulated value(3.84) at level of significance (0.05), degree of freedom (1) and p- value (0.3173). This means that there is not a significant difference between Muslims and atheists in committing fallacies.

The table below shows the values of Chi-square test of fallacies committed by both parties, Muslims and atheists.

Table (2) Values of Chi-Square Test (Fallacies / Muslims and atheists)

	O	E	$(O-E)^2/E$ = X^2	df	Level of Significance	p-value
MUS	6	8	0.5	1	0.05	0.3173
ATHS	10	8	0.5			
TOTAL			1			

O=Observed, E= Expected, X^2 = Chi-square value, MUS=Muslims, ATHS=Atheists, *df*=degree of difference

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

In hot debates, arguers may follow the proverb that says aims justify ends. That is they may take wrong path by virtue of the outcome. In this way they are more liable to commit fallacies during their discussion. Since fallacies are defects that weaken arguments and undermine the logic upon which they are based, they are considered negative. In the following extract, the atheist commits fallacy of the argument from ignorance (*Argumentum Ad Ignorantiam*):

If a God existed, the universe should be different in some way. In some way that we would know it but as we look through the universe as we go through the trash cans and the doors and we look everywhere we see the universe that looks as if there is no God. We actually do have evidence of absence .

Since he infers that God does not exist because of absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. If someone lacks the evidence of the existence of something, he cannot assume that it does not exist.

Poisoning the well is another type of fallacy. It occurs when the discussant blocks the way of his opponent by saying that what he is about to say is discredited or unreliable. An arguer instills doubt in the minds of his audience in order get them not to consider the forthcoming argument . Yet the case here is not exactly the same. In this situation, the Muslim is polite and he keeps praising his opponent by saying that the latter is experienced and prominent and he will not make such a weak claim:

...because in this logical disjunction you have four options: (1) either the universe came from nothing, which is impossible ontologically mathematically and cosmologically. It is not possible . No one has argued this really. It's a weak argument. I don't think my interlocutor with his

experience will go there. He's very prominent and very experienced. He won't go there.

However, by doing so, he preemptively silences his interlocutor who does not take it as negative at all. It has been mentioned earlier that arguers may intentionally or unintentionally commit fallacies but mistakes are mistakes whether they are done deliberately or not.

Another type of fallacy that has been identified in the data of the current study is straw man argument. It is a fallacy that occurs when an arguer attacks an argument that has not been raised by his opponent. For example, the Muslim debater is talking about morality in general without making reference to specific figures yet the atheist commits a straw man a fallacy by saying:

Atheist :*Yes. Are you suggesting that someone like Socrates was a deeply immoral man?*

Muslim: *No, I'm not saying it. I'm saying...*

Atheist: *Your notice, you seem to be implying .*

Here, the atheist is being fallacious as he attacks a point that his interlocutor, the Muslim has not advanced at all. He misrepresents his opponent's position in order to make it easier to criticize and he creates an illusion that his opponent's position is refuted by switching the original argument with a different one. In the next turn, the Muslim arguer defends his position explicitly and denies making such a claim.

Another type of fallacy is ad hominem which is committed by the Muslim debater. It has been earlier described that this type of fallacy occurs when an arguer attacks the arguer himself and not his argument. In the following extract, the Muslim arguer shows explicitly that his interlocutor, the atheist, is a moral nihilist. However, he makes a moral claim. From his view point, the atheist is not warranted or eligible to raise any claim on objective morality because he is a subjective moralist:

Now the interesting thing is you have a nihilist, someone who does not believe in existence. He is existential Nihilist who is cosmic skeptic nihilist, existential nihilist, a moral. He is an epistemological nihilist. He doesn't even believe in morality and he's making a moral case today. I mean , I don't know how this works. I really don't know. He says I subjectively value my liberty in one of his videos the moral argument (1:16) one hour 16 minutes, tell me how? From first principles liberty is what ?

In this way, the Muslim arguer abuses the atheist himself and not his argument. He attacks his interlocutor as a person and equates this attack with his argument. However, his argument may be valid and sound.

It is noteworthy that a fallacy cannot be identified by means of one clause. One needs to follow the whole argument to identify a fallacy.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the data analysis, the present study has come up with a number of conclusions. First, both debating parties, Muslims and atheists commit fallacies. Second, the most common fallacies in Muslims' arguments are straw man argument, poisoning the well and

attacking the person whereas the straw man argument, argument from ignorance, hasty generalization and appeal to compassion are the most committed ones by atheists. Other types of fallacies are not identified in the debates under study. Third, atheist arguers exceed their opponents, Muslim arguers, in committing fallacies quantitatively and qualitatively. Fourth, fallacy of attacking the person is more dominant in Muslim debaters' arguments. Fifth, atheists commit the fallacy of argument from ignorance more than other types. Accordingly, both debating parties, Muslims and atheists are more liable to commit fallacies resulting from irrelevant grounds.

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تحليل تداولي للمغالطات في الخطاب الحجاجي الديني الانكليزي

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المستخلص

المغالطات هي أخطاء شائعة في الحجاج، وهي تقوض المنطق الذي استندت إليه الحجة. فهي تعيق الحجاج؛ لأنها لا تقود الى حل الاختلاف في الرأي. تتقصى الدراسة الحالية المغالطات في أربع مناظرات حُجبية دينية بين المسلمين والملحدين. وتتبنى الدراسة الحالية نموذج تولمن وآخرون (١٩٨٤) لتحليل البيانات. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى ان كلا الطرفين المتناظرين ارتكبا المغالطات لكن الأخير تفوق على الأول كماً ونوعاً، إذ تبين ان المغالطات الأكثر شيوعاً لدى المسلمين هي رجل القش وتسميم البئر، والشخصنة في حين كان رجل القش والاحتكام إلى الجهل، والتعميم الخاطيء، والتوسل بالشفقة هي أكثر المغالطات شيوعاً لدى الملحدين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المغالطات، رجل القش، الاحتكام إلى الجهل، الرنجة الحمراء، الشخصنة