

Examining Transgender Community in Pakistani Media: A Content Analysis of English Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Over the past few years, the Pakistani Supreme Court has taken major action to protect transgender people's rights. In a similar vein, the Court ordered municipal governments to change laws in order to safeguard the rights of the transgender population. However, there are differences in how the law and courts perceive transgender identity, which makes the fight for basic rights more difficult. The purpose of this research is to examine and evaluate how transgender individuals are portrayed in Pakistan's top newspapers, Dawn and Express Tribune.

Methodology: To investigate the media's role in promoting social inclusion and bringing attention to the problems encountered by the transgender population, the researchers used quantitative content analysis. The purposive sampling technique was applied to select the newspapers' content, mainly their frequencies, tone, and topics.

Findings: Results showed that the transgender community receives inadequate coverage in newspapers, news reports, and other sections. The newspapers examined in this study did not emphasize placing transgender-related stories and items prominently. Besides, the representations of the transgender community in newspaper content, particularly on op-ed pages were significantly underrepresented.

Conclusion: Thus, it is concluded that media representations and framing of transgender are critical sources influencing the transgender community's image in Pakistani society. Their affirming depictions of transgender people have the power to alter attitudes and actions toward this community and speak directly to the process of gender identity formation.

Keywords: Mass Media, Transgender, Pakistan, Media Portrayals, Newspapers.

Study Background

Transgender community in Pakistan were granted opportunities to work for the government after federal and provincial courts decided that they also be given rights in all spheres, which also included employment and education and inheritance besides others (S. Abbas et al., 2021). The Supreme Court of

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Pakistan allocated transgender people the right to vote, and five transgender people ran in the inaugural election in 2013. The Pakistani government tightened its grip over khwaja siras despite its best efforts. The modern discourse on sexuality, according to Foucault, arose in mainstream societies of wet using technologies used for power and bodily discipline, which included controls like that of confession and medical intervention besides state regimentation, and public moral policing. When secrecy grew more critical in the twentieth century, this surveillance of sexuality got more intense, as stated, "a constant threat to the perceived moral legitimacy of the State" (Ahmad & Warraich, 2023). The Khwaja siras had been expressly neglected by the state ever since independence was first questioned, according to powers granted to Trans in 2009. Pakistanis participated in gender ambiguity in politics and practices of strategic assimilation, while the state attempted to comprehend, define, and organize Khwaja siras in accordance with religious and cultural norms (Batool & Rowland, 2021). The relationship between the Khawaja sira identity based on politics and social norms is made clear by the national culture of the dominant society and its public arena. As Stuart Hall noted "national culture is a discourse, a fabrication that shapes and organizes people's behavior and self-perceptions". However, despite the illusion of togetherness, it does not eliminate disparities among citizens, who are riven by internal inconsistencies and divisions (Pamment, 2019).

Moreover, mainstreaming Khwaja siras was urged by Pakistan's public circle as a reflection of popular opinion. In addition to political organizing, religion, the dissemination of written and oral texts, performances incorporating history, and other means, the Pakistani public is also (re)produced through media and rhetoric. This public is not spatial, but rather ephemeral, emerging from and through discursive and transient moments (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2018). For example, it came up through Khwaja siras' interactions with their neighbors besides the media. In addition, the Pakistani public is heterogeneous, with polarized and overlapping points of view. The fact that Khwaja siras endured acceptance]p and social alienation besides outright rejection and violence at the same time demonstrates Pakistan's uncomfortable coexistence with several publics (Ahmad & Warraich, 2023). Notably, Pakistani media has focused on transgender community. Mainstream media has utilized transgender people as a weapon to achieve various agendas; they have framed and misrepresented this gender in front of mainstream media users or audiences. Some fundamental concerns are addressed in mainstream media, but media authorities also manipulate the community. These media distortions inflict pain on the whole transgender community. The reports regarding transgender being used to giving favor or to them in the media suggest presenting the transgender to give them respect in society, but unfortunately, media use it negatively, which degrade them, and people consider them of low gender. People make fun of them and abuse them with derogatory words. Nobody respects this gender, and no one is willing to employ them, leading to their economic and human rights violation (Shah et al., 2018).

Study Aims

Transgender people are covered by international, constitutional, and national human rights laws. Other traits such as gender identity and gender expression are also included in the discrimination based on prohibition and 'other status,' whether they are explicitly listed as banned grounds of discrimination or not. Based on these argumentations, this research aim of this study is to examine media representations of transgender community in Pakistan. The focus remained on their portrayals, their issues focused by media resources, and potential framing of the relevant community.

Literature Review

Transgender Portrayal in International Media

Media have focused much on the transgender community during the past few years. Films such as *Waris Jari Hantu* (2007), *Anu dalam Botol* (2010), and *Sutun* (2007) highlighted the ideas of making those trans-students beautiful and stylish that were mostly obtained from the printing and electronic media. Many print media platforms like Cleo; Glam; Maskulin; Female; Remaja & Eh provide the ideal images of beautification and femininity (Ghazali & Nor, 2012). A study by (Mocarski et al., 2019) indicated the

responses of many transgender people, indicating that many magazines are easily accessible to them from bookstores within their vicinity. Images like Beyonce and Tyra Banks, Erra Fazira, and Amber Chia are their idols because these female celebrities artist represents 'sexy, stylish, beautiful, great personality, diva and popular. It embodies being a female, inspiring them to imitate their role models. According to (Billard, 2018), the influence of films and dramatic portrayals of the transgender community have surprisingly been most important due to the characters becoming role models.

However, sometimes media content also represents the struggles and hardships faced by Transgender communities as a positive aspect of media for social change. As a result, (Redding, 2020) considers media an influential tool in disseminating information concerning trans identity and aiding the production of transsexualism. It is the actualizing agent that promotes these ideas and forms social identities. A study by (Dias & Rocha, 2021) focused on the Brazilian transgender community. The respondents were transgender stage artists, screen actors, and prostitutes living in Sao Paulo. The findings indicated the portrayals of transgender identity as shaped in the culture and media. Notably, the Brazilian transgender community is inherently linked with prostitution, where transgender people mostly work in the sex industry. The stereotypes regarding the transgender community developed in Brazilian society from prostitution and drag queen shows. (Dias & Rocha, 2021) further argued that the portrayals of transgender in stage shows, dramas, and films are for humor, merely aimed at entertaining the audiences. The role of the transgender community is set to be a refusal to the normal heterosexual gender roles, and they are openly permitted to perform their stereotyped roles on stage.

Transgender Community in Pakistani Media

The current disparity in the transgender community's visibility in Pakistan's mainstream media is considerable (T. Abbas et al., 2014). The media portrays this community as antisocial, harming social values and norms. These representations cause a great deal of harm to transgender people in Pakistan. Transphobia is prevalent in print and electronic media, encompassing various forms of hostility toward the transgender community (Ullah et al., 2019). Consequently, the transgender community in Pakistan regularly encounters discrimination, including negative portrayals in the media. These portrayals often depict the transgender community in essentialist and constructed ways, perpetuating negative stereotypes and reinforcing societal prejudice (S. Abbas et al., 2021). Media depictions not only shape public perception but also significantly impact the lived experiences of transgender individuals. Despite the increasing visibility of the transgender community in the media, there is a notable lack of research on this issue (Ahmad & Warraich, 2023).

The current representation of transgender narratives in Pakistani media is heavily biased and misleading, often presenting a limited understanding of transgender identity (S. Abbas, 2019). Often, transgender constructs in Pakistan are framed using Western terminology, which can embed transphobia. While the media now features more transgender individuals, this progress comes at a cost. The portrayal of transgender people in Pakistani media has gained cultural and social attention in recent years (Tabassum & Jamil, 2014). However, the problem lies in the uncritical consumption of media narratives by society at large. These media representations impact the transgender community through legal, cultural, and social aspects of transgender identity. Media narratives tend to assign separate subcultural spaces for transgender individuals, distinct from those reserved for males and females. These narratives create a sense of ghettoization, excluding those who do not fit into the traditional male or female categories. It is an intriguing case where gender surpasses humanity. Consequently, it necessitates theoretical reflection to reconceptualize the identity and inclusion of transgender people (Malik et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory by Goffman provides theoretical support to current research. The notion of framing is inextricably related to the communication theory of agenda setting. Framing is the process through which media generally focuses attention on a few topics and then position them in a specific area of meaning. He contended that mass media creates and reshapes imperfect mental images of reality (Chong &

Druckman, 2007). Framing theory plays an important role in presenting, altering, or ending the picture of an incident that can also be applied to portrayals of certain communities in media (Klaehn, 2002). According to (Chong & Druckman, 2007), framing is always dependent on interpersonal communication, which is utilized to assess the data's current psychological context. It investigates the significance of context (Marton, 1992). Based on premises provided by framing theory, the relevance of transgender community portals in Pakistani media is of greater significance. For instance, a study by (Solomon, 2016) highlighted eight transgender (four transmen and four trans women), discussing their experiences of transition technologies and role of media platforms in showing their concerns. Respondents expressed their concerns about media portrayals and perceived access as a potential cause of harm to them and other community members. The argued that they suffer from violation of their human rights, various discrimination and barriers caused them to have poor mental and physical health care in Europe. The restriction of the education and hindered from the labor market towards the trans lead them to unemployment as well (Akhtar & Sadiq, 2021). Besides, gender recognition and access to health care services for this minority group depend on states and the health insurance they have. Thus, based on the relevant evidence, the current research employed Framing theory to analyze content data by creating frames for both "Transgender Issues Frame" and "Media Reporting Frame" for this purpose (Dias & Rocha, 2021).

Methods

Content Analysis

The study is based on a qualitative research design in which videos and articles were reviewed to check the portrayal of transgender in media. This study chose Content analysis as the basic data collection approach. As noted by (Macnamara, 2005), content analysis is a study strategy for systematic, quantitative, and objective techniques for the description of the manifest content of the communication. Further, the quantitative method was used to measure the frequency of the news reported, and qualitative analysis was used to interpret the viewpoints presented by the media, such as news articles.

Population and Sampling

The population of the current research consisted of the "Transgender community highlighted in Pakistani media." However, the sample was later narrowed down, and $n= 225$ newspaper articles were selected for further analysis. The researchers selected five newspaper articles by transgender people as a sample. The sample size of this study included all news, articles, editorials, and letters to the editor published from October 2019 to March 2020. Two English newspapers, Daily Dawn and Daily Express Tribune, and their front and back cover news reports, including the editorial page and articles, editorials, and letters to the editor, were selected from the universe of this study. Table 1 summarizes the Newspapers data selected for the current study.

Table 1: *Selected Newspapers*

Sr	Name	Type	Title	Published	Language
1	DAWN	Editorial	Transgender right	June 30,2017	English
2	DAWN	Editorial	Affirming trans identity	May 11, 2018	English
3	DAWN	Column	Trans inclusion	January 20, 2019	English
4	DAWN	Editorial	Moving from the margins	November 30, 2020	English
5	The Express Tribune	Article	Gurus can give data of transgender people: official	January 8th, 2021	English

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers designed a coding sheet to interpret media portrayals of the Pakistani Transgender community numerically. Newspapers' content on transgender issues was gathered for the study. The

content analysis was designed to investigate the level of emotions in transgender behaviors. For this purpose, the researchers adopted a quantitative method that fulfilled the demands of interpreting the qualitative data into the quantities likely ratio, intervals, and frequency. Further, the news coverage categories of transgender communities were set as Violence / Crime, Transgender Rights / Welfare, Health Issues, Achievement / Success Stories, and Miscellaneous.

Frequency

Agenda-setting theory was taken into consideration when counting and analyzing the amount of news stories on the editorial page and video segments about the transgender community voice. The measured tones of the news stories and other published materials were classified as Positive, Negative, and Neutral. On the basis of contextual (circumstantial) units, these analyses were conducted.

Placement

One of the most important factors in determining how much weight is given to the concerns is placement. The front and back pages were carefully considered when arranging the news articles. This timeframe (October 2019 to March 2020) was selected with consideration for the state's legislative initiatives and the transgender community's health card distribution in mind. The selection of these publications was based on their broad readership, which includes influential people, decision-makers, stakeholders, public servants, and the general public.

Analysis and Results

Data from the first newspaper (Panel, Table 2) is consistent with articles highlighting “After a long time, an array of a landmark agreement by the Supreme Court of Pakistan acknowledged transgender people as Pakistani “citizens” with full essential rights. Notably, a transgender person named Farzana Jan has become the very first member in her community to be allowed a passport along an ‘X’ in the gender section, standing for non-binary gender”. Further, the second newspaper (Panel 2, Table 2) was based on the article regarding “Pakistan made history by becoming the world’s one of only a few countries to pass enlightened legislation to protect the essential rights of its transgender civilians — including interest of employment, ownership, heritage, to the referendum and to influence public office.” Data from Panel 3 was based on newspaper’s column reporting “a positive symbol that the activist for transgender rights Hina Shahzadi register lawful petition against the harassment and torment towards her community in Lahore. Boycott marginalized and usually victims of the clash. Pakistan’s Trans Civilian is a makeable day when their presence is not slightly abided by but celebrated. Their effort embraces a right so elemental that most non-transgender / cisgender persons take for granted that of a self-recognized identification. For Pakistanis Transgender, every day is a remembrance of this hardship”. Panel 4 of Table 2 was also from the same newspaper, “DAWN,” published as an editorial article. The relevant article referenced a transgender person named Nisha Rao, who was the first Pakistani transgender lawyer to show the different aspects of her life. Like other transgender community members, Nisha left her home, unwilling to beg on the roads to make end meets. A few times, she erected at traffic lights and pleaded in obtain to endure but was dogged to forge a new way for herself. She earned money to pay a fee for law education and enrolled at college, earning a degree and license. Later Nisha joined Karachi Bar Association. Currently, Nisha works in a Non-Governmental Organization to advocate trans community rights. Finally, Panel 5 indicates the article from the Express Tribune provides some basic details about the transgender community. As noted, the leaders of the transgender community, which is widely known as gurus, are the most reliable expert for providing accurate data on who identify as transgender. Transgender is important, as are the people who shelter abandoned trans children. The collected data from the 2017 population census showed that our country had only 10,400 transgender people, which was inaccurate.

Table 2: *Summary of Data from Newspapers*

ID	Name	Type	Title	Language	Language
1.	DAWN	type editorial	Transgender rights	published June 30, 2017	language English
2.	DAWN	Editorial	affirming trans identity	published May 11, 2018	language English
3.	DAWN	Column	Trans inclusion	published January 20, 2019	published January 20, 2019
4.	DAWN	Editorial	Moving from the margins	published November 30, 2020	language English
5.	The Express Tribune	Article	Gurus can give data of transgender people: official	January 8th, 2021	English

Data Frequency

In the tabular representations, the data underwent a descriptive analysis. The quantity, tone, and placement of news articles about the transgender community in the Daily Dawn and Express Tribune have drawn special attention. Furthermore, the transgender community reporting phenomena is explained through editorial tables and letters to the editor. The data analysis's goals are to determine the quantity of messages and their attitude toward the transgender population.

Table 3: *Frequency of the News Reports & Editorials*

Newspaper	News Reports	Percentage	Editorials	Percentage
Daily Dawn	09	45%	03	60%
Express Tribune	11	55%	02	40%
Total	20	100%	05	100%

Regarding the news and editorial frequency, the findings show that over the chosen six-month period from October 2019 to March 2020, the Daily Dawn issued nine news stories and three editorials. Compared to the Daily Dawn, Express Tribune has published 02 editorials and 11 news pieces in terms of coverage. This demonstrates how underrepresented the transgender population is in the media, particularly in print. As a result, both publications continue to support the belief that the transgender community is underrepresented (See Table 3).

Table 4: *Tone of the News Reports & Editorials*

Newspaper	Tone	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Daily Dawn	News Reports	05 (55.56%)	02 (22.22%)	02 (22.22%)	09 (100%)
	Editorials	02 (66.66%)	01 (44.44%)	0 (0%)	03 (100%)
Express Tribune	News Reports	09 (81.81%)	0 (0%)	02 (18.19%)	11 (100%)
	Editorials	02 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	02 (100%)

The tone of the Daily Dawn's news stories and editorials is more balanced and supportive, despite the fact that the transgender community has not been adequately represented in the publication. It released two editorials with a favorable code and five good news reports. Two Daily Dawn news stories have been classified as neutral, and two as negative. Furthermore, one editorial that is critical of the trans community appears to have been published. Comparably, the transgender community has not received much coverage in the Express Tribune's reporting over the past six months, while the news reports and

editorials have generally taken a positive stance toward the group. Nine of the eleven news reports have been coded as positive, while two have been coded as neutral. The 02 editorials in the Express Tribune are also positively coded (See Table 4).

Table 5: *Placement of News Reports*

News Reports	Front Page	Percentage	Back Pages	Percentage
Daily Dawn	01	44.44%	08	47.05%
Express Tribune	02	66.66%	09	52.95%
Total	03	100%	17	100%

The researchers also found the same under-representation in the field of message placement. A person's placement frequently has a significant impact on their spirit. News that appears on the front page is given greater weight than that which appears on the other or back pages. According to the study's findings, the Daily Dawn only published one of its nine total news items on the front page, while eight of its nine news reports were published on the back cover. The Express Tribune's location illustrates the same situation. Just two of the eleven news reports—of which there are eleven—are featured on the top page, with the other nine appearing on other pages (Refer to Table 5).

Table 6: *Frequency of Articles and Letter to Editors*

Newspapers	Article	Percentage	Letter to Editor	Percentage
Daily Dawn	0	0%	0	0%
Express Tribune	01	100%	03	100%
Total	01	100%	03	100%

It is important to highlight that no article or letter to the editor discussing any part of the transgender population has received even one place in the Daily Dawn. This draws attention to the underrepresentation of the transgender community in a national elite publication. Nonetheless, the Express Tribune's coverage indicates that the publication has published three editorials and one piece featuring a transgender community representative (See Table 6).

Tone of the Gathered Data

Based on information from the Daily Tribune, the tone part of the article and the letter to the editor were analyzed. Regarding the articles' and the editor's letter's tone, the Express Tribune published three letters to the editors in a positive light, while the newspaper's one piece is classified as negative (See Table 7).

Table 7: *Tone of the Articles & Letter to Editor*

Newspaper	Segment	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Daily Dawn	Articles	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Letter to Editor	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Express Tribune	Article	0 (0%)	01 (100%)	0 (0%)	01 (100%)
	Letter to Editor	03 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	03 (100%)

Categories in Newspapers

The majority of the news articles and opinion pieces are written in a favorable tone, according to the content category results. It has been noted that the welfare of the community and transgender rights have received increasing attention from both publications. In addition, certain studies on the health problems brought on by transgender people engaging in sexual activity, crime, and violence against community members are released (M. A. ul H. Rashid et al., 2023). During the six months of the study, there is just one published story about a transgender person who won an award and was featured in the newspaper as a success story. There aren't many other news stories that highlight the actions and initiatives taken by

international organizations and other transgender community stakeholders. The frequencies and percentages of the categories that make up the total content are compiled in Table 8.

Table 8: *Overall content categories covered in both Newspapers.*

S/R.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Violence / Crime	03	10.34%
2.	Transgender Rights / Welfare	15	51.72%
3.	Health Issues	05	17.25%
4.	Achievement / Success Story	01	3.44%
5.	Miscellaneous	05	17.25%
6.	Total	29	100%

Discussion

This study looked at the frequency, tone, and placement of representation in Pakistani newspapers. The primary goal is to use the content analysis method to quantify the outcomes. The study's findings held true to previous investigations on the pertinent subject (Awan & Pianezzi, 2023; Jesus & Caldas-Coulthard, 2018; Nazir & Yasir, 2016). The underrepresentation of the transgender population in media discourse has been noted in previous studies, and the present study has confirmed these findings. For instance, (Asghar & Shahzad, 2018) examined the representation and found the same results in three months of consistent op-ed analysis of four famous dailies. (Saddique et al., 2017) identified that the members of the transgender community have been widely neglected. The newspapers consider the government officials as sources of information without representation from the trans community. They are not only underrepresented, but the portrayal of the transgender community in the media discourse is very offensive, as identified by (Billard & Zhang, 2022). The findings of this research study are supported by (A. Rashid & Rashid, 2022) observing that Pakistani media portrays gender in a way that is more favorable to men with regard to cultural norms. The community should be represented in the media since it is not dependent on the population ratio. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrate how little the transgender community is represented in the media (Farhat et al., 2020). The results of this study so demonstrate that the transgender population is not receiving as much coverage in news articles and other parts of newspapers. The study's target publications have also placed less emphasis on where the news articles and other things are placed. The transgender community was underrepresented in the newspaper, particularly in the opinion pages. Since transgender people are viewed as gay in Islamic contexts, the main cause of the underrepresentation of the trans community in media discourse and its lack of coverage can be attributed to non-acceptance behavior in the Muslim world (Solomon, 2016). However, other research studies focused more on portrayals, and the placement has been missed in the earlier studies (Alam, 2019; Ansari, 2018; Khalid & Martin, 2019). The results of this research study demonstrate that stories about the transgender population are not given the same importance in the chosen newspapers. As a result, the study's findings are consistent with other research on the subject of how the trans community is portrayed in the media.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research study employed the framing theory to analyze the portrayals of the transgender community in Pakistani media. The findings indicate that the media framing of transgender individuals in Pakistan is influenced by dominant social and cultural norms, resulting in biased and stereotypical representations. The data indicated further insights regarding the transgender community and its marginalization. This marginalization perpetuates negative stereotypes and contributes to the discrimination faced by the transgender community in Pakistani society. The study highlights the need for media professionals to adopt more inclusive and accurate approaches that promote understanding, empathy, and acceptance of transgender individuals. Furthermore, the research underscores the

importance of media literacy programs and advocacy efforts to challenge and counter existing reporting patterns. By promoting diverse and positive representations, Pakistani media can play a crucial role in fostering social change and promoting equality for the transgender community.

Future Research

The research has pointed out a very sensitive issue that needs attention and will be helpful for future studies. A study regarding common physical and psychological health issues would be an interesting area for research. The issues faced by transgender people who want to get an education and opt for another respectable profession also need to be explored. A comparison between the living standards of transgender in developed and developing countries will also open ways for this community to live a better life.

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Conflict of Interest


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