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Breaking the Silence: Transgender' Perception of Media Portrayal and Societal Acceptance in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The aim of this study is to analyze how media portrays transgender community and how they perceive about it. It further explores whether this media portrayal has exalted their status in the society or demeaned them. Moreover, study analyses the value of societal acceptance before and after mass media started touching upon the transgender lives. Objective of the research is to promote conducive environment for the transgender community by highlighting the issues and grey areas.

Methodology: Qualitative research technique employed for the study, wherein, a carefully framed and an all-encompassing questionnaire based on open-ended questions was answered by the transgender community. Sample comprised of (n=91) participants from Rawalpindi and surroundings. The questions covered aspects of how transgender community perceived their portrayal in media and what was the level of transgender community's societal acceptance.

Findings: It was established during the study that media mostly portrayed the transgender community as a stigma on the society, further pushing them into darkness. Society never treated transgender community fairly or equally, rather treated them as an element of society to be ridiculed. Transgenders are still subjected to harassment and fun in schools, colleges, hospitals and job interviews, therefore, forcing most of them to live of begging. Despite presence of laws the transgenders are not given equal rights including that of burial.

Conclusion: Research concluded that there is a need of authentic transgender representation in media to effectively portray their true self in addition to creating an independent transgender media. Moreover, media should play an important role in enhancing public awareness apart from efficient laws and ensuring their abidance/ implementation.

Keywords: Perception of media portrayal, Perceived societal acceptance, Government policies, Legal rights, Public behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Somewhere in the quietest corners of our society, places where darkness dwells live a portion of our society, who have learned to live and breathe comfortably in the darkest slumps and faded lights. Once the sun rises, they are often seen on the roads, at the traffic signals, taking their chances to survive and get their meal of the day. At night they can be found at marriages and functions, that too in villages and backward communities (Khan et al., 2024). Their clothes are colorful but lives are colorless; eyes filled with hopelessness and despair. Transgender community of Pakistan has its deep roots in the history of South Asia, where they once served in the bars of Mughal Kings of the Sub-Continent. Now they are merely surviving, trying to live a life without fear. This segment of our society is deprived of their basic right of a respectable and decent living. Their life is mostly dependent on the charities of the society. They ask for help from people who consider themselves normal but not them. They ignore them, laugh at them, despise them, pity them, push them and even take them for granted. Most of them do not have homes, job or family. People of transgender community live a life full of pain and anguish. Even after death, they are not given a proper/ respectful burial or funeral (Jan et al., 2022).

Why this happens? Is it our religion that does not allow us to treat people who were born different (with no fault of their own) respectfully? The answer is No. Islamic tradition acknowledges the existence of transgender individuals, addresses the issues of their rights and treatment, especially in Fiqah (Transgender individuals are referred to as *Khuntha*). The Quran does not explicitly mention transgender persons but it repeatedly reaffirms that Allah is the creator of all variations in creation (Al-Quran; Surah Ash-Shura 42: 49-50). Now the burden comes on the society. Is it the societal barriers or just the thinking? what would people say if they come to know that there is a transgender born in our family? Or see us talking with one? These are societal barriers which we have never been able to cross (Shah et al., 2018).

In Pakistan, transgender people are not treated with kindness. A big reason is how they are shown in media on TV, in films, and in the news (Zahra & Abbas, 2024). Most of the time, they are shown as jokes, dancers, or bad people. This research wants to know how transgender people feel about how they are shown in media and how this affects the treatment of society in real life. Are they shown with respect or just for fun? Do media help them get respect or make their life harder? Present research brings the feeling of their pain, carries the story of their struggle to live and be accepted as a normal human being.

Table 1: *Pakistan's Population Profile as per 7th Census, highlighting the declared transgender community strength*

Name of Adm Unit	Area in Sq Km	Population - 2023				Sex Ratio	Density	Urban	Avg House Hold	Population 2017	Avg Annual Growth Rate
		All Sexes	Male	Female	Transgender						
Pakistan	7,96,096	241,499,431	124,324,406	117,154,694	**20,331 (.0084%)**	106.12	303.35	38.88	6.3	207,684,626	2.55
KPK	101,741	40,856,097	20,845,747	20,009,233	**1,117 (.0027%)**	104.18	401,57	15.01	6.9	35,501,964	2.38
Punjab	205,345	127,688,922	65,448,376	62,226,589	**13,957 (.010%)**	105.18	621.83	40.71	6.4	109,989,655	2.53
Sindh	140,914	55,696,147	29,014,424	26,677,501	**4,222 (.0075%)**	108.76	395.25	53.97	5.6	47,854,510	2,57
Baluchistan	347,190	14,894,402	7,768,166	7,125,471	**765 (.0051%)**	109.02	42,90	30,96	6.4	12,335,129	3.20
Islamabad	906	2363,863	1,247,693	1,115,900	**270 (.011%)**	111.81	2609,12	46.91	5.7	2,003,368	2.80

Table 1 depicts the total population of Pakistan in terms of different sexes and has been extracted from information available at Pakistan Bureau of Statistics official sight showing results of Census 2023. Transgender denotes 0.0084% of the population (https://pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/national.pdf at https://pbs.gov.pk). Punjab mentioned in 3rd row is not only the largest province in terms of population but also houses the maximum of transgender community i.e. 13, 957 out of 20, 331. Moreover, it has one of the highest ratios i-e 0,10% only less than Federal Capital, Islamabad.

1.1 Context

Many writers and researchers have written about the pain of transgender people. In the Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017), Arundhati Roy writes: "She lived in the graveyard like a tree... her roots growing inward, deeper into the earth." This shows the loneliness and sadness of transgender lives. In Life on the Margins of Bombay: A Hijra's Story (2010), Serena Nanda writes: "Their existence challenges the neat boxes of male and female... and so they are punished for it by the society. In Status and Rights of Transgender in the Constitution of Pakistan by Hussnain et al., (2023), showed that "Their biggest fear is not violence but invisibility - to be ignored, unheard, unseen. McLaren et al., (2021) in their study highlighted that transgender characters are often shown in funny or negative roles in media. This makes people think badly of them. Past research shows that media has a strong effect on how people think. When transgender people are shown in a bad way, people treat them badly. When they are shown with respect, people feel kindness towards them. A study said that 60% of transgender people had never seen someone like them shown in a good way (Tabassum, 2025).

1.2 Problems that persist

With the new laws in place, there are still numerous issues facing the transgender community. They are abandoned by their families, during education they bullied in schools. They are not usually able to be treated at hospitals. Despite being qualified and educated, they are not given jobs. They are harassed by people in the streets and on online media. There are even those who die, after death, they don't get a proper funeral or place to be buried. The Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act (2018) bestowed certain rights upon them, but the majority of them continue to live in fear and despair. They desire that they be treated with respect, that they be safe, and that they live like everyone else.

1.3 What this research focused on?

This research focused on two main things:

a) ***Media Portrayal***: How transgender people felt they were shown in media?
b) ***Societal Acceptance***: How society treated them because of these media images?

This research also looked at:

c) How good or bad the media showed transgender community (***accuracy***)
d) If they were shown in unfair or bad ways (***stereotypes***)
e) How often they were shown (***visibility***)
f) If the media made them look strange or shocking (***sensationalism***)
g) If different types of transgender stories were shown (***diversity***)
h) Transgender rights under the 2018 law
i) Problems transgender faced in getting jobs, education, healthcare, and family support
j) How culture and religion affected their acceptance in society

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on "*Breaking the Silence: Transgender' perception of media portrayal and societal acceptance in Pakistan"* has its theoretical underpinnings in the "*Framing Theory*". This theory helps us understand how media shows people and events in a certain way. According to *Erving* Goffman (1974) in his book Frame Analysis, framing means choosing some parts of a story and showing them more strongly. This changes how people think about that story or group. This theory is relevant to the subject research as it clarifies how the media demonstrate transgender community. Their funny and bad image on media may cause of dis-respect in the society. Only the positive image on media can cause of respect and kindness in the society.

Present research used open ended questions to ascertain what transgender people feel about how they are shown in media. Framing theory helps to understand how media show the image of transgender and how these media pictures affect the way others behave with them. It is a good way to study media and social acceptance in Pakistan. In Pakistani context, the Transgender (*term loosely used***)** Persons Protection of

Rights Act, 2018 was made to give equal rights to transgender people, like access to education, jobs, healthcare and protection. But these rights are still not fully given. This study also looks at how media can help people understand and respect these rights.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Significance of the Study

Research is significant as it can aid people to understand the problems faced by the transgender community due to their individual and collective behavior. It also brings out the role of media and how it changes the way people think about the transgender community. This study will help the transgender community to showcase their feelings and present their case that will in turn create a need of positive or at least normal media portrayal. This may help the society to rethink and change their behavior towards the transgender community.

3.2 Research Gap

Many researchers have written about the problems faced by the transgender community; few talk about the rights while others talk about how people treat them. A few also talked about how media shows them but none have asked the transgender community about their feelings. Therefore, a gap exists, wherein, media portrayal and its effects on the societal acceptance from the transgender community point of view were not explored. Present research covers the gap by bringing out the transgender community perception of media portrayal and how it affects the societal behavior towards them.

3.3 Research Design

Qualitative research design was applied for developing a deep understanding of thoughts, feelings, and experiences of transgender community. Qualitative research is a way to explore people's lives through their own words and stories. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research helps in understanding people’s personal meanings and social realities. For this study, open ended questionnaire-based interviews were done with transgender individuals living in Rawalpindi and nearby areas. These interviews gave space for open and honest conversation in a safe and friendly setting. The purpose was to let transgender people speak for themselves, share their views on how media shows them, how they feel about it, and what kind of respect and support they want from society. This method helped capture their real voices and gave a true picture of their struggles and hopes.

3.4 Population/ Sample Frame

Transgender population in this study refers to the population who was interviewed for the research. The majority of them were from Rawalpindi and others were residing in small towns and villages around the city. In order to enable the researchers to meet with a larger number of transgenders, the study was carried out in Punjab. (As per the Table 1, maximum transgender individuals are residing in Punjab Province). They belonged to various social groups, including community workers and laborers, beggars, and some who went to school or worked in an office. This helped to have diversity of opinions and experiences. Data collection was not without its difficulties since the participants were shy and reluctant at first. They were not able to speak openly for fear of rejection and judgement that they had to endure in their lives many times.

The researchers used a "snowball" sampling technique, which means that one participant introduced another. Over time, with patience, trust was established and others were willing to share their stories. Participants were treated to the freedom of expression of their opinions. Everyone was able to say what they wanted to say, free from any pressure or fear. The interviews were done in safe and private places where participants felt comfortable. They understood their feelings about media images and how society treated them through their voices, thoughts and their experiences in life. This is a sample frame that

enabled the researchers to collect authentic and rich information which reflects the true voice of the transgender community in Pakistan.

3.5 Sample Size and Technique

For this study, the sample size consists of 91 transgender individuals. The technique used to select these participants is called snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a method where one participant led the researchers to other participants who fit the criteria of study. This technique is very useful for the sample groups, who are difficult to find and are small in numbers.

According to Neuman (2014) in his book Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that relies on referrals from initial participants to identify further participants. It is especially useful in studies involving marginalized or hidden groups. In this research, snowball sampling allowed the researchers to find transgender individuals across Rawalpindi, nearby towns, and even areas outside Rawalpindi. This technique helped ensure that the study included a wide variety of voices and experiences, which is important for understanding the real-life challenges and perceptions of transgender community in Pakistan.

3.6 Data Collection Tool

The major instrument employed in the collection of information in the study was 'Open-Ended Questions'. The following questions provided the transgendered individuals with an opportunity to have their own words and feelings and experiences described in detail. It enabled the researchers to gain insight into their perceptions of the media and its impact on their lives. Research questions were developed to be used in exploring important topics in the study. The questions that were aimed at included: 1) How they felt about the image given to them in the media, 2) whether the media was contributing to a better understanding of the rights of the transgender community and its struggles, and 3) whether the media was helping to promote the basic rights of the transgender community and their struggles. The questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the aim of the study. It raised questions on the impact of media representation on the lives of transgender persons and whether this made the society learn about transgender rights and issues.

3.7 Data Analysis

'Descriptive Statistical Analysis' of respondents' profiling and question wise reply undertaken to draw pertinent results including the overall sentiment index. Three visual representations also used to exhibit the patterns of response by the respondents across multiple domains of media portrayal and societal acceptance. Heat map of response pattern across questions gave a clear picture of media portrayal and transgenders' perception of the portrayal.

4. RESULTS

Table 2 exhibits the respondent's profiling summary. First characteristic denotes average age which comes to 33.58 years (13 participants out of 91 did not provide the age information). 2nd characteristic is the average education whose mean comes to 5th class, however factually, most of them cannot read or write and are dependent on others. 3rd characteristic denotes the profession which is begging for almost 50% (48.4 percent precisely). Once asked why they chose begging as the profession, maximum replied that the harassment they get during job interviews leads them to begging being the easiest. Moreover, jobs given offer minimal pay i.e. Rs 12, 000 to Rs 30, 000; instead begging gives them much more economic space. As per 4th characteristic i-e area of residence, maximum individuals (57 out of 91) belong to Rawalpindi and surrounding areas.

Table 2: *Respondent's Profiling (Based on 91 respondents presently)*

Demographic Characteristics	Variable	*Frequency*	Percentage
Average age	Mean age	78	33.58 years
	Note: 13 participants did not provide age information		
Average education	Mean educational level	91	Grade 5
	Begging	44	48.4
	Dancing	9	9.9
	Toli	5	5.5
Profession	Sex work	6	6.6
	Sanitary Worker/ Janitor	5	5.5
	Other occupations	4	4.4
	No answer	11	12.1
	Rawalpindi and surrounding areas	57	62.6
	Islamabad	3	3.3
Area of residence	Lahore	3	3.3
	Other areas	17	18.7
	No answer	11	12.1

Table 3 shows that there is significant variation in findings across the thematic domains. Overall, 38% felt positive about the portrayal of media, while 34% felt negative or mixed and 28% did not watch TV, indicating selective disengagement from TV due to negative or mixed feelings. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents had a negative rating of media quality, indicating dissatisfaction with the current media portrayal, while the rest were positive. Limited representation in media was also observed as 40% felt that they were not represented, while 31% felt that they were visible to some extent.

There was overall a negative impact of media on self-image as 30% described it as 'damaging' and a significant 59% did not respond, which may have been attributed to discomfort in discussing psychological effects. When asked what they wanted more from the news media, 43% said they wanted more positive representation and 18% said they wanted more opportunities to be directly represented. Overall, social acceptance was low: family rejection (56%), community rejection (54%) and unfair treatment by the public (39%) were reported on a very regular basis, indicating the presence of deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers to inclusion. Notably, government support was seen in a more positive light, with 61% recognising institutional support.

Table 3: *Detailed Descriptive Analysis by Question*

Responses to the Questions	Frequency	Percentage
Feelings about Media Portrayal		
Positive	34	38%
Negative	22	25%
Mixed	8	9%
No Answer / Don't Watch TV	27	28%
Quality of Media Portrayal		
Good	7	8%
Bad	43	48%
Mixed	10	11%
No Answer / Don't Know	31	33%
Representation in Media		
Yes (Recognized Representation)	28	31%
No (No Representation)	36	40%
Don't Know / No Response	27	29%

Impact of Media on Self-Image		
Positive / Empowering	10	11%
Negative / Damaging	27	30%
No Answer	54	59%
Desired Media Role		
“Give us Jobs / Let us Represent Ourselves”	16	18%
“Show us Positively”	39	43%
“Mixed / Neutral”	9	10%
No Response	27	29%
Family Acceptance		
Yes	17	19%
No	51	56%
Don’t Know / No Response	23	25%
Community Acceptance		
Good / Accepting	13	14%
Bad / Rejecting	49	54%
No Answer	29	32%
Public Treatment (General Society)		
Yes (Treated Fairly)	12	13%
No (Treated Unfairly)	36	39%
Don’t Know / No Response	43	48%
Government Support		
Yes	55	61%
No	11	12%
Don’t Know / No Response	25	27%
Societal Acceptance		
Yes	17	19%
No	48	54%
Don’t Know / No Response	26	27%

The distribution of table 4 reveals a clear imbalance between affirmative and negative experiences. Only 26 percent of the total responses are classified as positive, indicating that a minority of participants perceive media representation, social treatment, or institutional support in a favorable manner. In contrast, negative sentiments constitute the largest proportion at 41 percent, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction, stigmatization and marginalization experienced by transgender individuals across multiple societal domains.

The mixed/neutral category represents only 5 per cent of all responses, indicating that there are few ambivalent viewpoints, as responses are often more polarized and form a gradient around exclusion or non-recognition. It is also worth noting that a relatively high amount of “No Answer / Don't Know” responses (28 percent) were received. This could mean that they are not allowed by some institutions to share their experiences (e.g., in the media, public services) or that they do not have confidence in the structure of these societies to share their experiences. Overall, the sentiment index highlights the ongoing structural inequalities and the importance of targeted reforms to increase representation, social inclusion, and institutional responsiveness to the needs of the transgender community in Pakistan.

Table 4: *Overall Sentiment Index*

Sentiment	Frequency	Percentage
Positive / Yes	231	26%
Negative / No	362	41%
Mixed / Neutral	46	5%

No Answer / Don’t Know	312	28%

The three visual displays show the overall picture of transgender respondents' perception in various areas of media representation and society's perception of transgender literature in Pakistan. The figure 1 stacked bar chart offers an overall summary of the responses to each survey question and allows users to compare positive, negative, mixed and no responses. This visualisation clearly shows that negative perceptions hold more sway in the areas of quality of media portrayals, acceptance of the community, acceptance of the family and treatment by the community; while the government support has comparatively higher positive responses. The high rate of “No Answer/ Don't Know” responses across some of the items is indicative of hesitancy or under-exposure to media and institutional systems.

These patterns are then further broken down within the figure 2 group bar chart, which shows each response type in isolation. This makes it easier to see the differences, like how low scores came in for media quality and high negative scores for family and community acceptance. The chart also shows domains with relatively good outcomes, such as government support, that have the highest positive frequency.

The figure 3 heat map combines all these relationships in a more intuitive way, with the help of heat color grades that highlight concentration patterns. The darker the shade, the more frequent the corresponding frequencies and it is clear that the negative ones are more concentrated around the social and familial components while the positive ones are more concentrated around the institutional support components. Together these statistics highlight systemic marginalisation and a selective institutional advance.

Figure 1: *Graphical representation of respondents’ perceptions across multiple domains of media representation and societal acceptance in Pakistan*

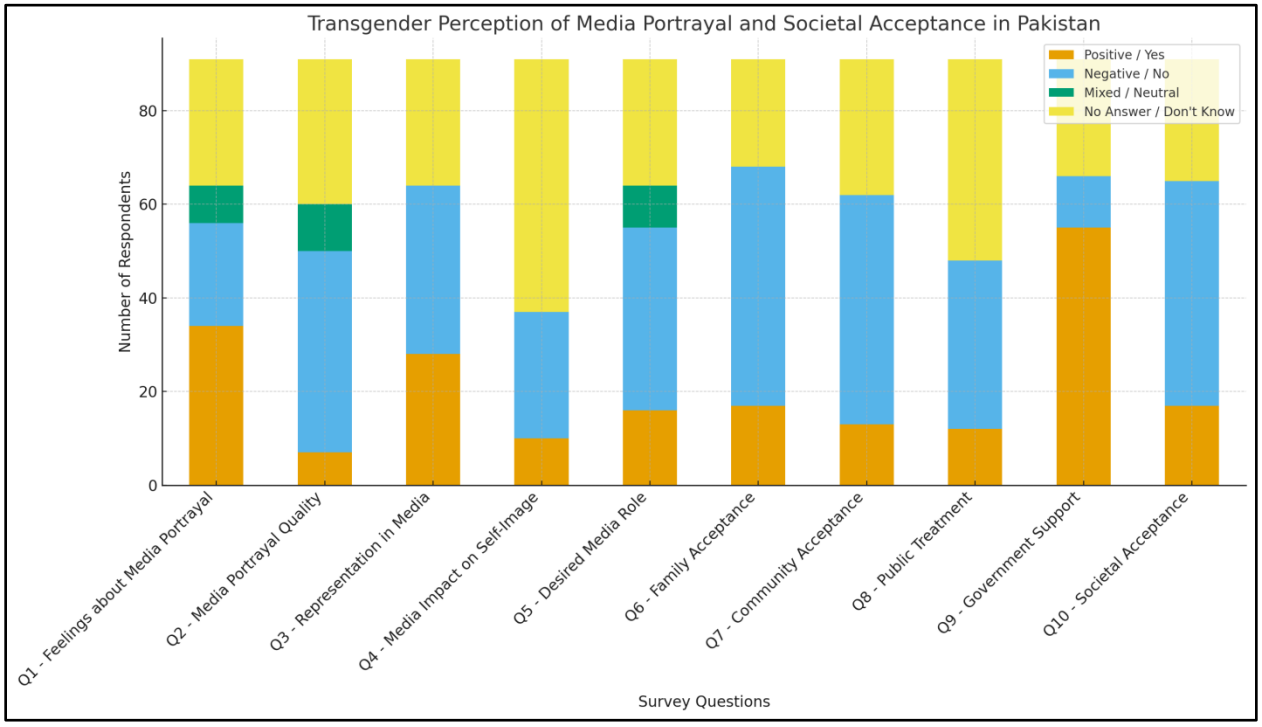


Figure 2: *Overall responses distribution by questions*

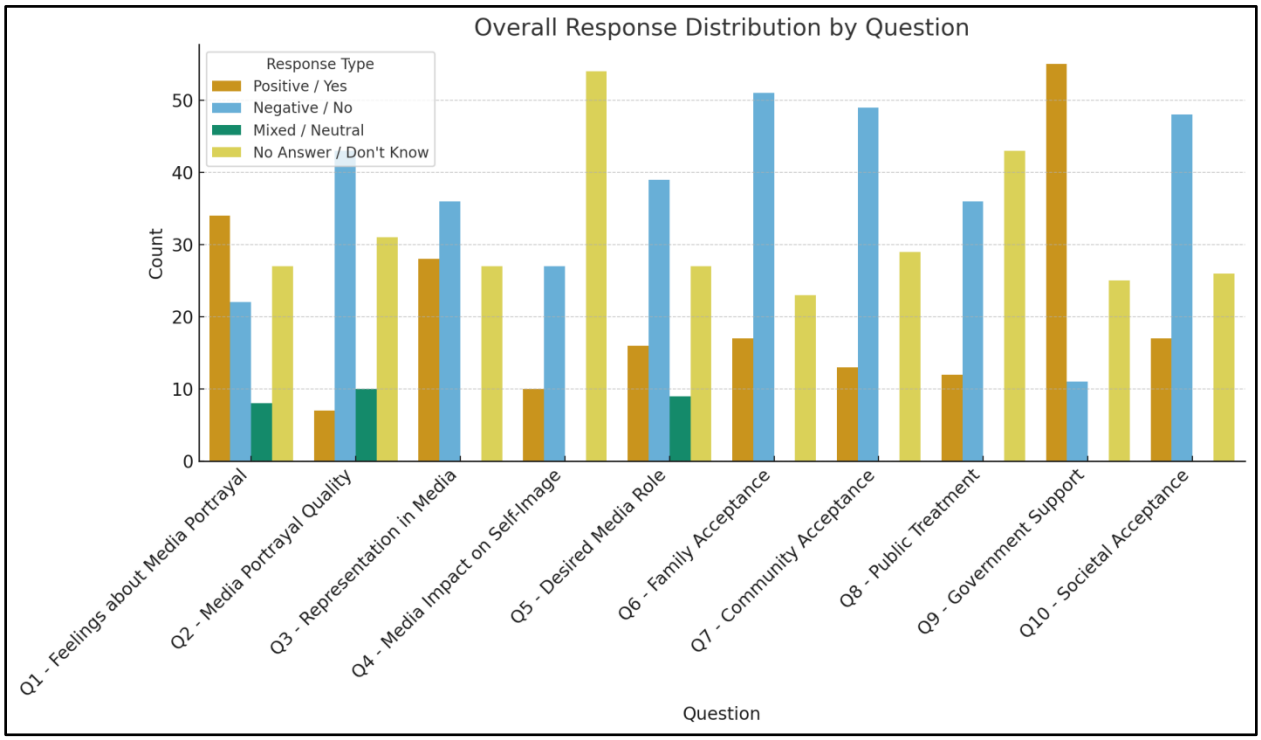
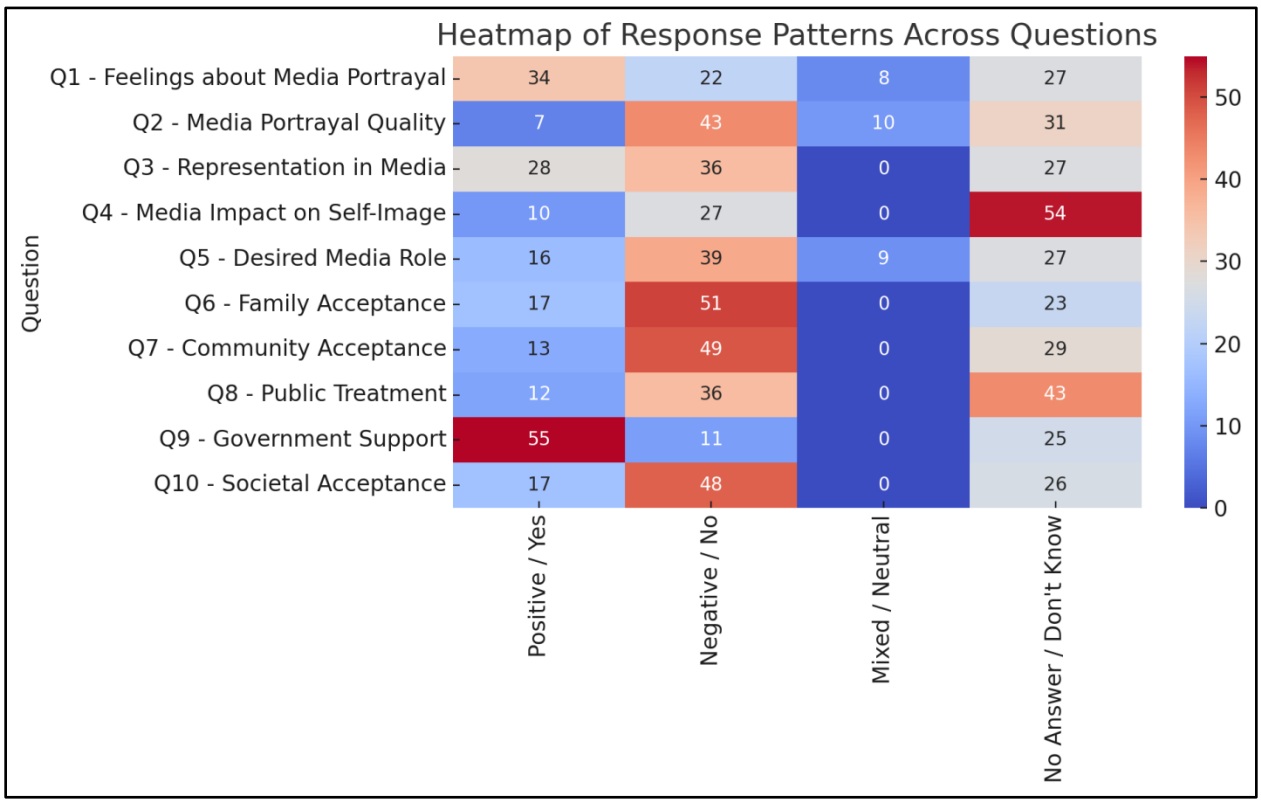


Figure 3: *Heatmap of responses pattern across questions*



5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Present research deals with the 'Transgender perception of media portrayal and societal acceptance'. Despite all the advancements, religions based on ethics/ doing good with humanity and opening up of societies, some elements of the society are considered taboo and are sidelined. One of such elements are the transgender community, who despite no fault of theirs are subjected to harassment and societal ridicule. Media with its outreach and enhanced capability to change perceptions can positively affect the lives of transgender community as they can positively shape the societal opinion by showing them equal, normal and part of the society. This study posed the question directly to transgenders as to how they perceive about their portrayal in media which brought out that media has most of the times propagated them negatively, thus the societal acceptance remained low. Therefore, study was able to establish a direct relationship between the Independent Variable (Media Portrayal) and Dependent Variable (Societal Acceptance). Interviews of transgender community concluded with majority not being happy with media portrayal.

As per Arqum et al., (2023) laws are only useful, once their implementation is ensured. Despite Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act, (2018), positive change in the lives of transgender community is minimal. Zaharin, & Pallotta-Chiarolli (2020) and Noor, Inam-Ullah, et al., (2024) in their study explored the religious factor and concluded that our religion encourages us to be good to Allah SWT's creations and that transgender community with no fault of their own has the complete right to live fear free and normal life. Despite this all, societal factors have overridden the good deeds and media on the contrary has supported the wrong ideas, resonating negative perceptions about transgender community. Same is the case with Snigdha (2019) who in his study covering Bangladesh established that transgenders face many challenges in inheritance rights, marriages and access to religious institutions which create a perception that religion may have less to do with it but the closed societies (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) find it difficult to adjust beyond obvious lines. Hussain, Saeed & Muhammad (2020) explored the legal rights of transgender community and established that they have similar rights as a normal man or woman but society segregates them and throws them out as a discarded item. Muwanguzi, Otiku, et al., 2023 and Zambezi & Viljoen (2024) established in their study that transgender community is not given health care equal to other normal society. Kumar & Datta (2024) in their study established that voices of marginalized transgender community were included to an extent but needed a lot of further improvement. Rehman, Huang, et al., (2024) established that there still existed hope and by joint efforts of government, media and educated citizens a positive change is possible.

Present research focused at establishing media portrayal of transgender through transgender lens and its linkage with societal acceptance. Subject research is very important due to the fact that for the first-time word is directly coming from the transgender themselves. This will help us understand the core issue and affect changes, where required. Maximum transgenders live in Punjab Province as shown in Table 1; which is not purely linked with Punjab being the population dominant province, rather due to the difference in the literacy rates and acceptability. Moreover, the study brought out a very important conclusion that is alarming; majority of the respondents (more than 48%) are beggars in Pakistan as explained in Table 2. Why it is so? Is it the societal deprivation which has brought them to this verge or is it that they have accepted it as a fait accompli? As shown in Table 3, 25% respondents feel negative about the media portrayal. Moreover, 48% respondents feel their media portrayal as bad and 43 % want it to be shown positively. More than 50% feel that their families, community and society do not accept them and that adds a pinch of salt to their wounds. As shown in Table 4, an overall negative sentiment prevails in their hearts and minds. Same has been amply and evidently brought out in Figure 1, 2 and 3. This further motivated the researchers to work in the dimension and unearth new vistas/ a new dimension; dimension of change that they can bring in the society through their research. Research will also trigger policy makers to bring a change, most important being rule of law and its strict implementation.

6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research covers the application of Framing Theory by Erving Goffman (1974) by exhibiting that under representation as well as misrepresentation of transgender community in media adds to the inaccurate social realities and further entrench the societal preconceptions. As per many respondents' transgender characters are played by other sexes that add on and augment the harsh realities and even the transgender roles are written by other sexes, thus taking the emotion out of equation, rather continuing with the stereotypical storylines based on entertainment and making fun etc. From the perspective of framing theory these media frames reproduce and augment societal understandings rather than challenging and countering them. Continued exposure to ridicule further curtail the liberty or initiative of transgender community to represent themselves and that is why 40% respondents in table 3 think that they are not represented in media. Thus, media framing not only affects the audience but also the actual representors' agency. This research, therefore takes the theoretical discussions one step ahead by establishing a relationship between media framing, representational inequality and further marginalizing the cornered voices. Research argues that transgender misrepresentation in Pakistani media is not the only negative portrayal but more severe one is the representational exclusion.

7. CONCLUSION

Though the study has been successful in establishing the linkage with media portrayal and societal acceptance, question remains what are the major factors that have inhibited or at least hindered independent media thinking regardless of the biases. Study revealed that there is an underrepresentation of the transgender community and their roles are being played by other sexes. That is why we see stereotyping, ridiculing and sensational story lines to create spicy content. In this all narrative that actual story (life of pain, sufferings and miseries) of majority of the transgender community is lost. These wrong portrayals create a societal misunderstanding, reinforcing the taboos/ stigmas, rather than creating a positive/ spacious/ breathing environment for the transgender community. Table 4 shows that 40% respondents carry a negative sentiment of the media portrayal and vis-à-vis societal acceptance.

Research was further able to highlight that the media does not promote transgender community to take lead in their roles and transgender people do not carry the strength to bear more harassment and dejection, therefore, opt out of this pain. This creates a fabricated/ narrative world, quite opposite to the reality; *Media has never shown reality in any case, how will they portray our real stories, once we are so downtrodden, Shazia, a street beggar transgender*. This world has been impacting the psychological well-being of the transgender people, creating in them feelings of isolation and marginalization. However, Social Media has set a new dawn, as it allows anyone to portray their feelings, thus increasing their visibility. But does this visibility mean enhanced societal acceptance? Answer is broadly no, why? Because an uneducated transgender portraying their community and an uneducated community watching may continue promoting prurience and spread misinformation.

Aspect of least societal acceptance translates into alarming rise in the transgender community (more than 48%) becoming beggars. Why this happens is because, society does not accept them on normal jobs, harass them, ridicule them and make it difficult for them to stay a normal life. Even, if they are offered jobs, those jobs are petty (Hair dresser, dancer, etc with maximum pays ranging between 15-30 k). If compared with begging, these jobs give them less than half of what they get from begging. *Once self-respect is hurt and prestige is lost, money, may in any form is acceptable, Babli, Wajood Foundation.*

Present research calls for promoting authentic representation in media, wherein, media houses to collaborate with transgender community and use them as artists, writers, story tellers for the reason that they can represent themselves in the best way. It should be a meaningful inclusion across various genres in mainstream media modes. It also establishes the need for developing ethical guidelines for media coverage by the regulatory bodies and media institutions in reporting the transgender issues. These should be beaded around the string of respect, dignity, privacy and consent. Moreover, there is a great need to increase public awareness through educational campaigns. In this regards government institutions, NGOs,

academia may be asked to formulate policies and create an informed and open society with greater acceptance.

Research also suggests to create an independent transgender media. Transgender community to be funded and resourced so that transgender-led media projects to be created and may include documentaries, movies, dramas, podcasts, blogs etc. Use of social media etc must be promoted for self-representation and awareness building. Study highlighted the need of a responsible media which encourages the society to accept the reality and behave normally with transgender community. Findings of the research will aid policy makers and media community to take the responsibility and come up with solutions for a more tolerant and balanced society.

7.1 Limitations

Despite all the efforts study has certain limitations, first being the limited number of respondents. Despite 91 being a good/ healthy figure may not be a true representation of the complete transgender community. Secondly the research only focuses on transgender perception and does include the counter argument by the media experts. Thirdly the difficult access vs time limitation, therefore, it was difficult to find and connect to the transgender individuals as they live in communities, generally away from normal population hubs. Finally, the resistance and stress resistance by family and friends for selecting the topic and two-fold emotional stress (working in a different environment and lack of support from the family).

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Authors Contribution

Anila Imran contributed to the study design and data collection, Dr. Siti Nor Amalina Ahmad Tajuddin and Dr. Muliyati binti Mat Alim drafted the manuscript and revised, proofread the research work. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The interviewed data generated and analyzed for this study are not publicly available and will not be deposited in any repository, to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, who were assured that no identifying information would be shared beyond the research team. The quantitative data set in this paper may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical Approval

The study has been done under the current ethical guidelines followed by Rawalpindi Women University considering human participants. We confirm that the study was conducted in line with the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki and all participants took part voluntarily after being informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality measures in place. No identifying details have been included in the manuscript.

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