

REPRESENTATION OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DAILY DAWN & EXPRESS TRIBUNE

Hadia Khalil, Muhammad Kamil Lakho, Abdul Bari & Usama Hassan Soomro

ABSTRACT

The transgender community is one of the segment of our population, which is socially, culturally and legally less recognized. The media representation is one of the key sources which influence the transgender people regarding their awareness and issues. It helps in changing the perception and behavior of the people towards this community and refers to the direct construction of the gender identity. The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the representation of the transgender people in the mainstream Pakistani English newspapers i.e. Daily Dawn and Daily Express Tribune in a comparative manner. Content analysis has been chosen as study design in order to know the prominence level and the contribution of media for the social inclusion and highlighting the issues faced by the transgender community. Systematic sampling technique has been adopted with the sample size of total news item, articles, editorials and letter to the editors published from October, 2019 to March, 2020. Both newspapers examined and studied in the terms of frequencies, tone and topics. It has been identified that the transgender community is underrepresented in the media. It is revealed that the Daily Dawn published 09 news reports and the Daily Express Tribune published 11 news reports relating to the transgender people in the study period. Moreover, the result shows that most of the published items are coded in terms of tone of the news as positive from both the newspapers. More news placed on the back pages about the transgender community in both newspapers. Comparatively, the Daily Express Tribune has given more coverage to the transgender community as compared to the Daily Dawn.

Keywords: Transgender, Representation, Community, Newspapers, Comparative Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The transgender community exists around the world with their own norms, culture, identities and basic rights. The term “transgender” is used to refer to those people who cross over the boundaries by their culture to contain that specific gender (Stryker, 2008). GLAAD’s media guide (2014) defined transgender as “an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth”. Trans is a short term of the transgender, which also includes some other variations such as trans people, trans woman, trans person and trans man (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2009).

In South Asia the trans people have faced terrible discrimination. Recently, the Pakistani and Indian Supreme Courts have recognized the gender identity of the transgender community as ‘third sex’ under their famous rulings. In this regard, in 2012, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled momentous judgment in *Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khaki v S.S.P (Operations) Rawalpindi*. This

judgment provides legal protection and social recognition to the transgender people in Pakistan (Khan, 2016). The Supreme Court of Pakistan issued a historic judgment on the transgender community of Pakistan by declaring them as equal citizens of Pakistan. The Supreme Court of Pakistan in its verdict called their psychological state as “disorder” in the broader understanding. (Redding, 2012). Hence, this verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan initiated the debates on the gender identity, equal rights, and acceptability of the gender diversity across the country.

The identity representation of transgender in media content is important because the good content educate the masses and the bad is harmful for the minorities, race and gender identities (Shaw, 2010). The media depiction of the transgender community, not only helps to inform the masses about their social identity, but it has few important impacts for the lived experience of their community members (Bocking, 2015). The news medium plays a pivotal role in creating the awareness, possibilities and limitations of transgender people’s rights and identities.

The mainstream media are enough powerful to decide what should be the news and how it’ll be framed (McQuail, 1987). Mainstream news media have a history of marginalizing and stereotyping representation of the communities, especially transgender community (Barker-Plumber, 2013). In 1950’s the transformation of an American trans woman, Christine Jorgensen was the first one to cause headlines, trans people often are covered in the sensationalistic way by news media outlets (Cloud, 2014; Hackl et al, 2016). While the (Billard, 2016) found that the tabloids covered the issues of transgender in delegitimizing manner. The way in which the pronouns have been used to communicate the gender identities and values contributes that how transgender community is being perceived by the news consumers (Pieper, 2015). Trans people in the media are often framed as deceptive through the use of offensive language (Capuzza, 2016).

Media coverage of the transgender and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals has increased in the recent past few years. This surge in coverage has paralleled the social changes (Steinmetz, 2014). After the 2009, the Pakistani visual media have started portraying the transgender community in a conventional way. So, the visibility and the media representation of the transgender community have been increasing in the recent past few years also in Pakistani perspective at some extent. Whereas, the situation of the gender representation in Pakistani media endorses men as cultural standards and presents them predominantly. The representation of any gender is not according to their population ratio, therefore, the presence of the minorities and the transgender community in the media is miniscule (Yarhouse and Carrs, 2012).

SOCIO-CULTURAL STATUS AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN SUB-CONTINENT

The history of the transgender community in the sub-continent has been divided into four periods, which includes ancient, medieval, colonial and contemporary. This third sex exists in the ancient text and they were referred as *kliba*, *pandaka*, and commonly known as “*napumsaka*”. In the medieval period, this got reduced to the eunuchs due to its socio-political role and the influence of Mughal era. The term “*KhuwajaSira*” was first initiated and coined at the time of the Mughal era and they were usually referred to the chief of the Mughal court eunuchs. The transgender people during that period were brought in as slaves (Reddy, 2006). The transgender people during the

Mughal period have served in the various posts which include army generals, advisors to emperors, harem guards, educators, messengers and the watchmen (Manucci,1908). During the colonial period the system was changed by the British Empire and they adopted different development strategies to maintain the social order. Moreover, this was the time of their marginalization because the colonizers viewed the acts of the transgender as the disturbance of the society. In order to maintain the public order, the activities of the transgender group were banned (Reddy, 2006). They passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 and declared the transgender people as criminal tribe. Resultantly, the transgender people faced social stigma, remained in isolation and faced economic constraints.

At the creation of Pakistan, the colonial law, Criminal Tribes Act came to an end. Society tried to provide the identity to the trans people. As per (Naqvi and Mujtaba, 1997) the process reversed in 1960 when government once again banned the activities of the transgender community. After, this social status and identity of the transgender people in Pakistan changed with the passage of time. The landmark in the history of transgender people in Pakistan are the years 2012 and 2018. Formerly, the Supreme Court passed judgment and provided gender identity as ‘third sex’ later on legislature of Pakistan passed ‘Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. This act properly describes the transgender persons, prohibits their discrimination almost in all spheres of the life and recognize their Identity etc.

Whereas, this study has been conducted with the following objectives.

- To measure the frequency of the coverage given to the transgender community in Pakistani English newspapers.
- To analyze the tone and placement of the coverage regarding the issues of the trans people. Additionally, for this study, we have set following questions to be answered from the data.
RQ1: What is the extent of the coverage in terms of frequencies of English newspapers regarding the transgender community in Pakistan?
RQ2: Where does the selected newspapers place the news regarding the transgender community and in what tone same is published?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Media plays an important role in determining the narratives and spreading the information. The media representation of various groups of the society can be reflective and influential. Media, especially, the newspapers are the optimal sources for the analysis of transgender people rights and issues.

This research study on the representation of the transgender people in the newspapers is not only important for the academic purposes, but it also has its practical implications. This study will help to know whether the representation of the transgender community by media is contributing positive results towards their lives, status etc. Furthermore, it will help to identify the core areas where the newspapers could improve and reduce the stereotyping and stigmas regarding the transgender community in Pakistan. This study will be proved little effort for the guidance of the policy makers while framing a policy related to media and transgender representation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of research studies on the media representation of the LGBT community exist, but most of the researchers have focused on the “L” and “G” portion while the “T” which means transgender have been neglected and ignored relatively (Spencer, 2015). The existing literature on the news representation of the transgender community is mostly based on the case studies of the news coverage of the public figures and celebrities (Capuzza, 2016). The coverage given to the transgender community was less and the issues were not properly addressed as per the need. It was found that some of the content which was produced was prejudiced and they enforced the stereotypical depiction of the transgender community. Total 19 of the items were published on the Op-ed pages of four dailies in the time period of three months. Among them, 09 were editorials, 02 articles and 08 letters to editors. This shows the low coverage and the underrepresentation of the marginalized group of people. The result indicated that the Op-ed pages have covered the community when the government has taken steps for the betterment (Parveen and Sadiq, 2018).

The state officials are the main and important source in the news reports while community members of the transgender have not given much representation. The statistics in the study shows an overall increase in the news reports in the newspapers, especially in the English newspapers. Among the total of 770 news reports which were reviewed for the study, 474 (61.5%) were published in the English newspapers which have a global discourse as compared to the national or cultural discourse (Awan, 2018). The transgender community has been portrayed as criminal elements such as human traffickers, sex workers, drug addicts and pick pockets. Despite the presence of a neutral term transgender the newspapers have used the offensive language such as “*eunuch, khusra and her male*”. These dichotomous terms exist not only in reporting, but in the editorial content as well. The transgender people reported in the media have been associated with the criminal elements. Overall, the criminal category that scored the highest percentage in the research study was prostitution 41%. Similarly, the second highest category was drug addiction 10.5% and the third category was human trafficking 6% (Asghar and Shahzad, 2018).

78% of the respondents believe that the media representation of the transgender community is inaccurate and the other respondents felt that the media have been the cause of ridicule among the community. The respondents believed that the transgender characters in the media are picked for the entertainment purpose mostly. The media has contributed to verbs such as abuse and sexual abuse, while they are more focused towards the Trans male than Trans woman (Kermode, 2010). There was a large group of young white trans women who were mostly portrayed as successful while the middle-aged trans people were often portrayed as negative and victims. However, the attitude of the journalists towards the transgender community was found positive and sympathize with them, whereas none of the journalists used any offensive language. The Dutch media reported only 01 article about a trans woman who works as prostitute or in the sex industry against the 41 articles about trans woman. This was the positive fact that the Dutch media reported 0.8% of its articles negative, whereas the focus of the media was more on the variety of the topics than the sexuality (Herber, 2019).

Respondents have perceived traditional media more authentic than the new media with the representation of transgender having integrated storyline and portrayal of characters. The online media give more freedom in order to express the identity and views. It was found that the information regarding the transition process from one gender to another gender and the experience

is easy accessible through YouTube videos including Vlogs. The trans women are more stereotyped in both of the mediums as compared to their counterpart trans man (McInroy and Craig, 2015). The media have been unethical in portraying the transgender community. It was found that the media sensationalize the news items in order to get the ratings so that the TV producers could earn more profit (Jobe, 2013). The information that is spread in the media, especially in newspapers, TV Channels and online mediums was not accurate and appropriate. The information makes the community feel disrespected or even harmful at certain moments in their lives as transgender. The media coverage given to the transgender is a prejudice which portrays them as fascinating objects. The inappropriate language, pronouns, misrepresentation and exposing their identity and status without their consent were the things that were addressed by the group (Silva de Assis, 2014).

The Brazilian transgender community is inherently connected with the sex industry. This stereotype was initially created by the prostitution and drag queen shows in the Brazilian society. During the 1970's the transgender across the Sao Paulo can be seen standing in the lines to attract their customers as they were the part of the sex industry. The media in Brazil portrays transgender as criminal and prostitute. The transgender characters in the Brazilian drama and films are still most popular with their prostitution image and they are being repeatedly stereotyped (Sjoberg, 2011).

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda Setting Theory

McCombs and Shaw (1972) composed the theory of agenda setting which focuses on the mass media effects on the public. This theory describes that the media have a greater influence on the public's agenda. Agenda setting was first introduced in 1968 in North Carolina when the presidential election campaign in Chapel Hill was at its peak. This theory has its two basic assumptions 1) the media rather than reflecting the reality, filters and shapes it. 2) By giving the continuous concentration on a few of the issues and topics media make the public to believe that certain issues are more important than others.

The founding researchers McCombs and Shaw (1972) believes that the media are not allowing their audience on "*what to think*" but rather "*what to think about*". They argue that the media have the power to make the public think and talk about the messages more they receive. It shows that the issues got more coverage in the media are the issues that are more perceived by the audience. This tells that the media have the ability to take the salient issues on the media and transmits them onto the public's agenda.

This theory is as important as for the coverage of transgender community as it is for the other information. Through agenda setting theory, the media outlets can make the public opinion and tell its audience regarding the issues and rights of the transgender community depending on how the media depicts and covers them. The mass media can be helpful in solving and highlighting the problems faced by the Trans people.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Content analysis is chosen as research design of this study. Content analysis is a study strategy for systematic, quantitative and objective technique for the description of the manifest content of the communication (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990; Zaidman-Zait, 2014). Two English newspapers Daily Dawn and Daily Express Tribune and their news reports on front, back pages, including the editorial page and articles, editorials and letter to editors are selected on the universe of this study. Systematic sampling technique has been adopted. The sample size of this study is total news item, articles, editorials and letter to the editors published from October, 2019 to March, 2020. The categories of news coverage of the transgender communities are set as Violence / Crime, Transgender Rights / Welfare, Health Issues, Achievement / Success Stories and Miscellaneous.

Variables of Data Analysis

- **Frequency**
The number of news stories and items on editorial page on the transgender community were counted and analyzed in the light of agenda setting theory.
- **Tone**
The tone of the published news stories, articles and other items was measured and the same are coded as *Positive*, *Negative*, and *Neutral*. These analyses were made on the basis of contextual unit.
- **Placement**
Placement is one of the most crucial things in order to investigate the level of prominence given to the issues. The placement of the news items was scrutinized on the basis of front and back pages.

The rationale behind choosing this time period i.e. October, 2019 to March, 2020 is in context with the state's efforts for the legislations and the issuance of the health cards to the transgender community. The reason behind the selection of these newspapers is wide circulation and audience that includes luminaries, policy makers, stakeholders, government officials and general masses.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data have been analyzed descriptively in the table forms. The especial focus has been given to the frequency, tone and placement of the news reports pertaining to the transgender community being published in the daily dawn and Express Tribune. Besides, tables of editorial and letter to editors also given for further understanding the phenomenon of the news coverage of the transgender community. The objective of the data analysis is the quantifying the number of the news items and knowing the attitude of the news reports towards the transgender community.

Table 1: 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%

Pertaining to the frequency of the news reports and editorials the results reveal that the Daily Dawn has published 09 news reports, while the editorial count is 03 in the selected time frame of six months from October 2019-March 2020. As far as, the coverage of Express Tribune is concerned, it has published 11 news reports and 02 editorials as compared to the Daily Dawn. This shows the underrepresentation of the transgender community in our media especially, print form of media. Therefore, both newspapers are upholding the attitude of the underrepresentation of the transgender community.

Table 2: 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%)

Although, the Daily Dawn underrepresented the transgender community in its coverage, but the tone of its news reports and editorials is more positive and neutral. It published 05 positive news reports and 02 editorials which are coded as positive. Among total, 02 news reports of the Daily Dawn are coded as neutral and 02 as negative. Moreover, it is observed that a single editorial is published that is negative towards the trans community.

Similarly, the coverage of the Express Tribune is not much in six months about the transgender community, but the tone of the news reports and editorials is quite positive towards the community. Among the total 11 news reports, 09 are coded as positive while, 02 of the news reports are neutral. Whereas, the total 02 editorials of the Express Tribune are also coded as positive.

Table 3: 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%

As far as the placement of the news items is concerned, the researchers have identified the same underrepresentation in this section as well. Placement often plays a key role in determining the human minds. The news stories published on the front page are considered as more prominent than the news stories published on the other or back pages. The findings of this study show that the Daily Dawn published 08 of its total news reports on its back pages and only 01 of the news reports out of the total 09 is published on the front page.

The placement of the Express Tribune reveals the same scenario. Among its 11 news reports, only 02 are published on the front page, whereas, the rest of the 09 reports are found on the other pages.

Table 4: 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 pertinent to note that the Daily Dawn has not given a single space to any of the article and letter to editor covering any aspect of the transgender community. This highlights the underrepresentation of the transgender community in an elite newspaper of the country. However, the coverage of the Express Tribune reveals that the newspaper has published 01 article and 03 editorials having a representation of the transgender community.

Table 5: 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%)

The analysis of the tone section of the article and letter to the editor is based on the Daily Tribune's data. As far as the tone of articles and a letter to the editor is concerned, the Express Tribune published 03 letters to the editors in a positive manner, while the single article which is published by the newspaper is coded as negative.

Table 6: Overall content categories covered in both Newspapers

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Violence / Crime	03	10.34%
Transgender Rights / Welfare	15	51.72%
Health Issues	05	17.25%
Achievement / Success Story	01	3.44%

Miscellaneous	05	17.25%
Total	29	100%

The results of the content categories show that most of the news stories and op-ed items are written in a positive discourse. It is observed that both the newspapers have been more focused on the transgender rights and the welfare of the community. Besides, some of the reports are also published on the health issues caused by the sex working of the transgender, crime and violence against the community members. In the six months of the study period, it is found that only a single story is published showing a transgender, who got an award and the newspaper presented it as a success story. Few other news items are also published showing the steps and efforts being carried out by the world organizations and the various stakeholders pertaining to transgender community

DISCUSSION

The study titled ‘Representation of Transgender Community in Pakistani English Newspapers: A Comparative Analysis of Daily Dawn & Express Tribune’ has been conducted to know the representation given by the English newspapers in terms of frequency, tone and placement. The main objective is to quantify the results, adopting the content analysis method.

The results of this research study are found to be similar and corresponding to earlier researches on the same topic. Earlier studies have identified the underrepresentation of the transgender community in the media discourse and the same results have also been reproduced by this study. For instance, Parveen and Sadiq (2018) examined the representation and found the same results in three months of consistent op-ed analysis of four famous dailies. Awan (2018) 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 Jobe (2013).

The findings of this research study are supported by the Khan (2017) who observed that the gender representation of the Pakistani media is more inclined towards men in reference to their cultural standards. As the representation of the community does not depend on the population ratio, therefore, its presence should be there in the media. However, the results show that the representation of the transgender community in the media is miniscule (Yarhouse and Carrs, 2012). So, the findings of this current study highlights that the newspapers are giving less coverage to the transgender community in their news reports and in other sections too. The targeted newspapers of this study have also given less prominence in designating the placement of the news stories and other items.

The news reports and especially the op-ed pages underrepresent the transgender community. The principle reason behind this less coverage and underrepresentation of the trans community in media discourse is because of their non-acceptance in the Muslim world as they are considered as homosexual in the religious environment (Khan, 2017). However, other research studies were more focused on the portrayal and representation, and the of the placement has been missed in the earlier studies. This current research study highlights the fact that the selected newspapers are not providing such prominence in terms of its placements to the stories related to

the transgender community. Therefore, the results of this study also match with the previous literature on the topic of the representation of the trans community in the media.

CONCLUSION

This research study investigates the coverage patterns and the representation of the transgender community in the English newspapers of Pakistani print media. So, Daily Dawn and Daily Express Tribune selected as the targeted newspapers for this study. The researchers identified underrepresentation and marginalization of the transgender community in news reports, articles, letter to editors and the editorials of targeted newspapers. It is observed that both the newspapers are not managing to provide enough coverage to the issues faced by the transgender community. The total 20 news reports are published in the study period of six months related to the transgender community. In the selected time period, only 05 editorials are published in both newspapers, while the editorial is considered as a viewpoint of a newspaper. The less publication of the editorials about the trans people not only underrepresent this community, but also questions the objectivity and impartiality of the newspapers towards the marginalized communities. As far as the placement of the news reports is concerned, it has been identified that more news reports pertaining to the trans community are published on the back pages. Moreover, the result shows that most of the published items are coded in terms of tone of the news as positive. Comparatively, it is revealed that the Daily Express Tribune has given more importance and coverage to the transgender community by publishing more news reports, articles and letter to editors as compared to the Daily Dawn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations on the basis of the above mentioned findings of the research study in order to better understand the problems regarding the representation of the transgender community are given as under.

- As the Daily Dawn is widely circulated newspaper and being read by the luminaries and stakeholders. So, they should review their editorial policies in order to prioritize the transgender issues, especially in their articles and letter to editors.
- It is suggested that the issues related to transgender community should be adequately addressed and discussed.
- It is suggested for the future researchers to analyze and examine the portrayal of the transgender community and the thematic analysis of their issues should be taken into account.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

HADIA KHALIL

Department of Media & Communication studies,
Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi, Pakistan.
hadia@smiu.edu.pk

MUHAMMAD KAMIL LAKHO

Department of Social Development,
Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi, Pakistan.
mkamil@smiu.edu.pk

ABDUL BARI

Department of Media & Communication Studies,
Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi, Pakistan.
bariabdul092@gmail.com

USAMA HASSAN SOOMRO

Department of Media & Communication Studies,
Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi, Pakistan.
soomromarxi@gmail.com