

Farooq Mumtaz¹
Abdul Malik Abbasi²
Sadaf Irtaza³
Muhammad Kamil⁴

Exploring the trans-gender's issues in Pakistani print media

Abstract

This research paper aims to explore transgender blues across Pakistani print media. In Pakistan Trans-genders are one of the most marginalized groups. Media is considered as fourth pillar of democracy. The main objectives of the study were to find out how much extent print media gives coverage to Transgender Community issues and are they satisfied with their existing rights which they enjoy. The research was conducted by going through last seven months' dawn newspaper and semi-structured interviews. Trans-genders are also interviewed regarding media's portrayal of their issues and tried to know their perspective and past experiences. Media seemed quite biased working for only its interest like for Television Rating Point (TRP) and business matters and sometime sensitizes issues to get more viewership. Study suggests that there should be more participation of transgender community in media industry that can portray issues of their community in media which might solve their problems.

Keywords: *Trans-gender, issues, print media, society*

¹MS student department of Media Studies, SMIUniversity Karachi

² Associate Professor-English, department of English, SMIUniversity Karachi

³ Assistant Professor, department of Media University of Balochistan, Quetta

⁴Lecturer, department of Media & Communication Studies SMIU Karachi

Introduction

A society where people in majority do not get their basic rights then how someone can talk about the rights of Transgender, who are neither men nor women, it relates to a person whose gender and sense of self-identity does not correspond with their birth sex. Gender expression is any person's behaviour, mannerism clothing, hairstyles, and voice or body characteristics. "Trans" is sometimes used as an acronym for "transgender." Those whose behaviour or appearance is gender-nonconforming will not identify as a transgender person'. They face humiliation in every stage of life from childhood to youth and to old age. Their families dump or disown them because of their gender variant identity; I do not know how their parents leave them because children are reflection of both the parents. In a world of deceit, malice and falsehood everything can happen.

Trans genders seek an understanding relatively to those who hold strong ranks in their community, notably their gurus who give her daughters (chelas) protection by providing working opportunity in her part of areas whether to beg on streets or to do odd jobs without their approval they cannot even do such jobs, because areas are divided between various Gurus who let their Chelas to work. That is another system where the newly migrated Transgenders from rural areas or other parts of country when come to Karachi they are sold to Gurus who make them work and get big share of their earning as their reward. Even in their own rituals they are disgraced and made to live life as prisoners of someone who has the key to their locked chains. It is evident that some of the Transgenders also try to

maintain relations with their families. However, increasing familial welcome will bring its own range of problems, especially in the sphere of inheritance which is mainly determined by their gender, where women as compare to men receive half the amount of men. It can generate family disputes but as far as Transgenders are concerned it was even worse because they were requisite to go through a medical exam to decide if their share would correspond to that of a male or female. But now without a medical board deciding Transgenders they can inherit property. Inheritance is given on the basis of gender identity they have chosen for them.

Background

In sub-continent Transgender people form a clearly well defined social class which is characterized by their own code of conduct and a strict hierarchy within their community. People who are neither male nor female Often referred to as “third gender”, they are assigned male at birth but wear women’s clothing feel themselves to be of the female gender and are often desperate for genital modification surgery. They believe that by removing the male typical organs they will reach communion with one of the Hindu goddesses Bahuchara Mata, where as in western context they are considered as Trans women.

One of the classic epics of Hindustan the ‘Ramayana’ which give Transgenders a history of virtually three thousand years, They probably held the very best power during the Mughal Empire, which ruled Indian subcontinent between 1526 and 1858. During the Mughul period Transgenders served in one of the highest offices in courts of law

asroyal advisers and protectors of royal Harems and palaces. It was believed that Transgenders don't have any sexual desire that led them to become ideal candidate for the professions which require significant amount of responsibility. Long before that during the reign of ruler Alaudin Khalji in fourteenth centuryMalik Kafur a Transgender who was a trusted courtier and an army general of the Delhi Sultanate. Circumstances of Transgender community rapidly changed in the course of British rule along with other marginalized group of people; In 1871 British Government passed Criminal Tribes Act and branded as 'criminal tribe' they were targeted by the authorities and the police force. This forced them to move to borderlines of social order and commenced to face gradual isolation and economic exclusion instances of external shaming led to humiliation and social stigma. Traditionally by blessing new-borns, newlyweds, and people who going through various life situations give them some money or simply they beg on streets that's how they earn money. Even many Transgenders in rural areas are doing this to make both ends meet. People believe that they have some sort of spiritual power and therefore they try to win their favour during important rituals of their life cycle because it is believed that through their prayers (transgender). Gob will be pleased with them. In past decades these traditional rituals have given way to sex work and begging, both of which activities are criminalized in Pakistan.

There is a notion in some of the regions that they experience a notable deal of respect from the broader community, in reality they face verbal and bodily violence,

structural discrimination, rape and harassment from both citizens and state institutions. Transgenders are in a precarious legal situation; in recent past a 23 years old transgender rights activist Alisha succumbed to death, she was shot eight times in Peshawar Capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa Province, when she was brought to hospital, staff could not decide whether to admit in a male or female ward in such a situation preference is given to treat the patient but she was left mercilessly on her deathbed, she needed emergency surgery following the attack But medical staff at the Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) was accused of failing to give her medical attention which was necessary to save her life instead of deciding where to admit, after all hospital is a place to cure patients without any discrimination.

There are various laws passed in which Transgenders are given identity and basic rights, but none of the government has acted upon the laws or acts which are passed by Supreme Court of Pakistan, In 2013 gave rights to Transgender persons which are even yet not completely implemented. It is of immense need to talk about coverage of Transgenders issues in Pakistan's mainstream national media and how it gives coverage to their issues, whether it is positive, negative or leading to portraying it as to solve, because media is considered as the fourth pillar of state and it plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy by recognizing and raising issues which are mainly ignored by state.

Literature Review

This paper examines how Pakistan's print media gives coverage to Transgender issues and what are their basic issues as addressed by them. In Pakistan there is a general opinion that these people are generally concerned with dancing, whoring and street walking. In this paper it is examined that what importance is given to Transgenders issues in Pakistani print media. There is very limited literature on reporting of Transgenders issues in Pakistani print media, some of the studies conducted by foreign Universities and institutions would be examined in order to produce a general idea of the research. "Trans Media Watch" (April, 2010) conducted a research = on "How Transgender people experience the Media and they want from them" 249 Transgender peoples were interviewed and questioned about trans issues coverage in media out of 249 respondents only 5% said that they saw daily, 14% responded 2 to 3 times a week whereas just 18% answered once a week.; 20.5% two to three times a month; whereas 24% said once a month and 19% even less than that. According to research 78% felt that reporting of Transgenders issues was inaccurate or highly inaccurate, 95% respondents expressed their concern that media do not care what Transgenders feel about their portrayal in Media's coverage. It was further found that 78% of them responded that representation of Transgender people in mainstream media is negative or very negative. This research further found that 67% respondents analysed negative items about Transgender people in media which often made them angry, whereas 50.5% answered that it made them unhappy. 34.5% felt it made them feel outsiders from the society and to 20% it made them felt

frightened. 60% answered that it made them feel bad about traditional societal norms. Just 2% Transgenders said that they get bothered by it. These frightened answered were given with strong feelings and due to perceived harm done by media to the reputation of Transgenders in society which had spread a negative image in society that made them excluded. They felt that Transgenders were being labelled as social outsiders who don't have right to live in this society.

Transgender people perceived that because of media's negative reporting they are labeled as child molesting perverts, because they are portrayed as figures to ridicule and they are laughed at regardless of their feelings. Another study conducted by "Kings College London" in collaboration with "On Road Media" (October 2017) on how do Trans people in UK (United Kingdom) perceive the representation of Transgenders and their issues in media. Out of 293 respondents it was widely recognized that 10% of Transgender said that they saw media items involving Transgenders every day, 31% saw several times a week, whereas 48.5% respondents felt that reporting of Trans people is negative or very negative. 13% described as positive or very positive, 76% considered it as inaccurate or very inaccurate. People who do not follow Transgender related content in alternative media and have not met a transgender in person are more probably to get information from mainstream media (Heinz, 2012). These peoples are policy makers, frontline practitioners, whereas media representatives who have big potential to influence Transgenders life. But with very little knowledge they might create more hurdles for them because that would create a knowledge gape in general public. A large number of

Transgender people experienced verbal abuse, that used catchphrases and slurs from media items, it affects their relationships with their parents, relatives and friends too which leads to damages.

Social prejudice towards Transgender appearance is too strong and despite the reality that they wanted to get education and learn skills as other humans but had to stay out of institutions. Studies reveal that practical approach is not adopted by the government for the unfortunate and plight of the transgender community. There is a need to formulate formal laws and policies in the education sector that facilitates the third gender community in institutions and on city levels to raise their issues (Tabassum& Jamil, 2014). If opportunities are provided situation would be even better because education can play a major role in Transgenders life as well as on the perspective of general public about them. Transgenders are engaged in such professions socially which are not considered as honourable. Transgender population has a positive aspect and willingness to adopt reputable professions in society all they need is governments support to choose the professions of their choice (Nazir&Yasir, 2016). A very few Transgenders are working in NGO's but despite that there are not any good job opportunities in government and private sector Government hadn't provided any vocational and technical skills to them through which they can start their own entrepreneurship. Recently a private Pakistani news channel 'Kohinoor' employed country's first Transgender TV Newsreader. She stated that *'they should be treated as equally and there shouldn't be any kind of discrimination towards*

Transgenders they should be given equal rights and be regarded as common citizen instead of third gender’.

There is an urgent need to spread awareness and provide education in society about third gender issues, Authorities should introduce special subjects or introduce gender studies course with stress on third gender in educational institutions throughout country. Until and unless society understands the issues and sufferings of parents having such children, because of societal norms parents disown there in early childhood which results in uneducated Transgender community who live on begging and doing odd jobs (Nazir, 2016). Due to the negligible space in socio-cultural, economic and political spheres, they are unable to get adequate benefits from social structures and institutions. They are extremely neglected from Socio-cultural, legal, educational and health services. They end up becoming outsiders and finally because of being left at the outer most levels of hierarchical social system, and their access to resources and services is restrained (Ahmed, Yasin& Umair, 2014). Deprivations, alienations, and hostilities are exposed to Transgender persons from early childhood which is soprofound and severe that at some places they find no social space and generally exclude themselves from mainstream society (Ahmed, Yasin and Umair, 2014).

2.1 Rights of Transgender in Pakistan

Recently on 7th March 2018 Pakistan’s National Assembly passed historic ‘Transgender persons (protection of rights) bill’ guaranteeing basic human rights to Transgender people

and prohibiting any discrimination or prejudice by Government or private sector. Law provide Transgender people like man and women a self-identity. Now they are capable to register as they want on all official documents which include National Identification Card (NIC), driving license, passport, and educational certificates. Now Pakistan's Law ensures citizens right to express their gender as they wish to; which states as 'a person's innermost and individual sense of self as male, female or even a blend of both and even it neither can correspond or not to sex assigned at birth". According to bill government is responsible to provide basic rights to Transgender community, it identifies as right to education, health employment, shelter, rights to inherit, to hold a public office and right to assembly. Bill states that Transgenders have right of access to public places, it further states that whoever employs or compels any Transgender person for begging or any unlawful interest will be punishable with imprisonment extending to six months or with fine which is up to fifty thousand rupees or with both. Legislation can remodel or transform this marginalized community. Traditionally inclined to entertainment, sex work and begging now they can be electoral candidates, Election observers, Government office bearers and many more opportunities. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1526547582_234.pdf

Purpose of Study

The purpose of study is to find out Real Issues of Transgender Community as addressed by them and how Media (Print) highlight their issues and at what extent it gives coverage to their issues.

Research Queries

- Why do print media give very low coverage to Transgenders Issues?
- What are the issues faced by the Transgender in Pakistani society?
- What are Transgender rights in the society?

Objectives

- To find out how much extent print media gives coverage to Transgender Community Issues.
- To find out how much Transgenders are satisfied with their existing rights which they enjoy.
- To find out what are the main issues of Transgender Community according to them.

Hypotheses

- Mainstream print media highlight the Transgender issues at a very low extent.
- A large number of Transgender people think that only education can play a vital role in changing people's attitude and perception towards them.
- Transgender community wants their issues should be more highlighted in mainstream media to get resolved on priority basis.

Research Designe

Qualitative method was applied on the study. Descriptive research design is selected because of the nature of the current situation of transgender population which is excluded from the mainstream society of Pakistan. This researcher utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. instruments used to collect data are Questionnaire, interview and observation and a set of 10 questions were asked through semi structured interviews to 20 respondents in various areas of Karachi.

Research Methodology

Content analysis research technique is used to make replicable and valid interferences by interpreting the textual material of last seven months daily Dawn Newspaper from June 2018 to December 2018, contents of newspaper which are analysed are both News and Views section. At the end Qualitative data is converted into Quantitative and summarized through Statistical Methods.

Sampling

In this research 20 respondents are selected from various districts of Karachi aged above 18 years of age working and unemployed both, because almost total population of Transgender community is struggling to make both ends meet, there are very rare cases of employment for Transgender.

Semi Structured Interviews

Semi structured interviews were conducted permitting them to go into detail about their experience regarding some questions. It helped to know how many people had been

affected by Media and what was their nature of experience. During interview various Questions were asked about portrayal of Transgenders Issues in print media and how they perceive the coverage.

Results

Dawn Newspaper’s news and views section of last seven months was reviewed and table below shows the results that how many times issues of transgender were reported, it was inspected that how trans people are being portrayed in print media.

Table 1.1 Reported News and Views about Transgenders Issues (June- November 2018)

June	Articl e	Editori al	Lette r to Edito r	Featur e stories	Intervie w	New s
June- 14	-	-	-	-	-	1
June- 16	-	1	-	-	-	1
June-19	-	-	-	1	-	1
June- 22	-	-	1	-	-	-
June- 25	-	-	-	1	-	-
July- 3	-	-	-	-	-	1
July- 8	-	-	-	-	-	-
July-10	-	-	-	1	-	-
Aug- 9	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aug- 10	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aug- 19	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aug- 21	-	-	-	-	-	1
Aug- 28	-	-	-	-	-	1

Sep- 11	-	1	-	-	-	-
Sep- 12	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sep- 15	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sep- 23	-	-	-	1	-	-
Oct- 26	-	-	-	-	-	1
Novemb er	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dec- 2	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dec - 10	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dec- 18	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dec- 21	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	0	2	1	5	0	14

Above data is collected from Dawn Newspaper's June to December Issues, and it shows that trans-genders reporting getting low exposure and highly neglected despite knowing the fact that they are the most affected, marginalized and left behind Community. In last seven months Dawn Newspaper have written two editorials and published one letter to editor in their Views or editorial section, whereas five feature stories and Fourteen news were published. No serious interviews, articles or investigations have been published in last seven months which is highly condemnable act despite being called the highly critical and unbiased Newspaper of Pakistan; it didn't give significant coverage as it should have been given.

Discussion: Raising the Voice for Transgenders Rights

Both editorials of Newspapers are advocating for the rights of Transgender people, in the first editorial it states that despite Supreme Court ruling in 2009 about Transgender identity and federal law which protects Transgender rights; they faced several hurdles during General Elections; 13 Transgenders announced their intention of running in the General Elections but due to harassment and physical assault two Transgender couldn't submit their nomination papers from Haripur (a city in Punjab) and Peshawar (largest city of KPK). In the editorial Authorities and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) were held accountable for the safety of Transgender people. It further states that Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) negligence during 2017 Census resulted in only 10,418 Transgender over all Pakistan; it raised severe concerns to many Transgenders because in various interviews in electronic media they stated that they are widely neglected. In another editorial titled 'Trans Rights' raises the issue of a Transgender woman whose 80% body was severely burned and found outside taxi stand in Sahiwal district of Punjab. Since unavailability of burn unit in District hospital she died on her way to Lahore's Jinnah hospital. No loved one came trying to find her, which made her as an unknown that never existed because even an FIR was also not registered. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province 62 transgender people have been murdered in 2018 (Dawn, 2018). It raised concerns that Transgender people are object to ridicule, discrimination, harassment and ultimately violence. *Transgender community continues to face poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities and secure*

housing. State only recognizes transgender citizens, but they are forced to live on the margins of society' said a Transgender rights activist NadimKashish who ran for general elections from NA-53 Islamabad the capital of Pakistan.

In feature stories awareness about Transgender rights is advocated through semi structured interviews of Transgender people who are working for their marginalized community, or those who are part of NGO's (Non-Government Organization) where vocational training and basic education is being given to Transgender Community, an inspiration is brought in order to attract more Transgenders towards vocational training and other Formal jobs. Transgenders study in special schools which are designed only for them, because they are subjected to bullying and harassment and even, they are kicked out of Schools in childhood and their parents don't even bother about that because they don't care about them. It follows the stories of many transgender peoples who were tortured, molested and harassed in public places and the places they used to dance for earning money. But unlike before now some of the Transgenders have not only chosen to come out confidently to raise their voices against injustice. With the passing of transgender act this year (2018), a door of hope has been opened a new fortune (Jalil.2018).Transgender Activists has protested several times against the brutal killing of their Community members throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (KPK), they alleged that last year in KPK only 479 incidents of violence and eight murders of transgender persons has taken place.'*People are killing Transgenders like chicken - in fact in more worse ways'* said a transgender protesting outside Peshawar press club. In

almost all criminal cases relating to killing of Transgenders killers are not arrested, cases are not properly registered to arrest culprits. *'I am born the way I am. It's not my fault. I tried to sell vegetables once but was mocked and even my hairs were cut down in Bannu (a district in KPK) once when I resisted attackers'* said Wafa a transgender person. Last year in January Shama an 18 year old transgender woman was abducted and brutally raped in Peshawar, On May 4 Muni a transgender woman who laboured as a dancer fatally shot in a party because she could not provide them change for a Rs1,000 note at a wedding. And two days later, Pakistan's National Assembly passed Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act. A country that is regressive on gender can show more progressive side if the act is executed affectively with an emphasis on Accountability. Activists, educationists and civil society organizations in Peshawar expressed concerns about growing violence against Transgenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa and urged government to ensure protection and provide basic families. 2018 witnessed a turning point regarding awareness and rights of the Transgenders, because for the first time five transgender women contested for provincial and national assembly seats. One of the contestants said that *"I faced many difficulties during election campaign. When I announced to contest for the general election, many made fun of me. Hooting, harassment, security issues and the behaviour of administrative authorities were the issues I faced during the whole processes.* Transgenders said *'we want a separate commission to protect rights like National Commission on the Status of Transgender. Government and the human rights ministry should play their role in creating awareness about Transgenders rights among the masses'*. It was found that print

media report about Transgenders only when something occurs in Supreme Court or parliament regarding Transgenders issues, while in some of the news published are protest by Transgender and seminars held at various cities. Otherwise it has vastly ignored reporting on Transgender issues which seems quite depressing for community. Laws are passed but there is no discussion in media to implement them.

4.2 Transgender Community's Voice: Interviews

Through semi structured interviews researcher got some of the interesting points from Transgender community about their participation in media, how much they consume news on daily basis, or do they feel that they are reported positively? Out of 20 respondents 10 (50%) answered that they are satisfied the way media portrays them and raise the voice for their rights. One of the respondents Sapna Rani states that *'it is only because of media their rights are being highlighted throughout and voice is raised. Through media they have got many of their problems solved because when state institutions humiliate and harass them there are only two choices whether to protest or to calm down. During general elections time media portrayed them and encouraged their participation in election which left a positive image in general public'*. Six respondents shared many details about media's reporting and what it made them feel, 2 of them compelled and opposed the portrayal. Whereas others said that sometimes they feel like suicidal, feel like they don't have voice, depressed, exhausted and like they will never be accepted in society as their own true self. These are the reactions and indications of media's impact on transgender people's

wellbeing. When asked about what role media should play in highlighting transgender issues 75% respondents said that *'media should build a positive image of transgender people's because those it affects mostly to trans children they feel humiliated even living with a family, families need awareness. Another participant responded that it is only media which can solve their issues and get resolved because it has much power to influence the heterogeneous audience'*. 60% Transgenders said they want to see more representation in media industry because being part of industry they can highlight their issues more affectively. Because when transgender people will be part of institutions their community members would feel socially safe. Even when asked about what role they want to play in media industry many opted fashion industry and news casting. 75% of the respondents said that fair and accurate media coverage can alter the thinking about transgender people and it would change the general public's behaviour towards them, it would feel like part of society because acceptance is the biggest issue which emerges because of lacking in education and awareness which is much needed, from childhood to old age they aren't accepted as normal human being. When asked about do they enjoy any right which they are given though constitution 70% said that they have nothing to enjoy one of the respondents said that *'laws are made but when there is need to implement no one comes forward because they feel that passing law is everything and after passing Transgenders would live a normal life'*, they are ignored in every aspect of life when we talk about laws, there are but in the books but practically Transgenders can't come to hospitals for health issues can attend schools or universities. People hate to give a place for

rent to Transgenders. Till now many laws have been passed but there is a need to implement them.

Conclusion

After going through last seven months' newspaper and semi-structured interviews it concludes that transgender people are deeply dissatisfied by portrayal of media, they stressed to increase the reporting of Transgenders issues because in last seven months only 22 times they are reported in various ways which is so little to solve their issue. most effective way to improve portrayal or reporting of transgender community is by involving more Transgenders in media and production because some of the feature stories are published which reflect the positivity of community work for the betterment of transgender people. If they will be involved, then the whole community will feel like there is someone from their community who would raise their issue. Apart from Transgenders issues awareness they drew attention towards the prevalence of misinformation and sensationalism in news coverage impacting on their life negatively. There is much needed attention required because the epicentres of this coverage are transgender Children, inaccurate and negative portrayal affects them psychologically which might lead to depression and ultimately suicidal attempt. It also strongly suggests that representations of transgender in media inspire verbal and physical abuse that they experience in their daily life, and it might be a significant factor in family breakdown which is already happening almost every family in Pakistani society disown their transgender child there are very rare cases of accepting trans children as normal children. It emphasis to

give more coverage to Transgender issues in positive way so that their issues get resolved it can build a positive and developing image of transgender community in the society. There is a need to accommodate or recruit without any kind of discrimination in government sector and private organizations to build peace harmony and equality within society and accept everyone as equal citizen.

Recommendations

Transgenders are very much frightened and highly unsatisfied about reporting on their issues, media and production houses should bring more participation of Transgenders so that they highlight their issues more effectively. Negative representation of Transgenders in media should be avoided and there should be a discussion on their problems, media should spread awareness about Transgenders issues which will create a friendly environment for them in the society and that can lead to acceptance in society. There is a need to act on laws which are passed since 2009 because in constitution transgender have all equal rights but when we talk about how much they enjoy then there are none.

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Appendix-1

Q-1: Are you satisfied the way media gives coverage to Transgender issues?

Q-2 What Role media should play in highlighting Transgender issues?

Q-3 Can fair and accurate media coverage really improve the lives of Transgender?

Q-4 what media should do to build positive image of Transgender instead of stereotype?

Q-5 How would you rate the media coverage towards Transgenders issues?

Q- 6 What are basic issues of Transgenders?

Q-7 Do you enjoy any Transgender Rights which are given according to Constitution?

Q-8 Can Education can play a vital role in pursuing Trans Rights?

Q-9 Through which mediums Transgender issues can be resolved throughout Country?

Q -10 If your issues are resolved one by one what should be your first Priority?