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Newspaper Representation of Transgender in Pakistan: A Multi-Modal Analysis

Qurrat-ul-Ann Malik
Aniqa Ali
&
Sumbal Fahad
Department of Media & Communication Studies
International Islamic University, Islamabad

Abstract

The aim of the research was to analyse the media visibility of transgenders. The study was conducted via a multi-modal analysis of photographs of trans-genders published in two leading dailies of Pakistan. The analysis was conducted on two levels according to the meta-functions of the visual design as proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996), which are *ideational* and *interpersonal.* On the *ideational* level, five themes emerged which were categorized as images showing confidence, glamour, deprivation, protest, and harassment. The number of images with the themes of confidence and glamour were significantly more in number in comparison to the themes of deprivation, harassment and protests though were significantly fewer in number although they bear the closest affinity to the everyday lives of the subjects. On the *interpersonal* level, it is interesting that most of the photographs maintained a direct eye contact between the subject and the viewer and thus create an interpersonal bond. A major anomaly which was observed referred to the absolute exclusion of female to male transgenders or trans-males, which is another case of symbolic annihilation.

Keywords: Transgender Representation; Newspapers; Multimodal Analysis.

تلخیص

تحقیق کا مقصد ٹرانس جینڈرز کی میڈیا پر نمائش کا تجزیہ کرنا تھا۔ یہ تحقیق پاکستان کے دو سرکردہ روزناموں میں شائع ہونے والی ٹرانس جینڈرز کی تصاویر کے ملٹی ماڈل تجزیہ کے ذریعے کیا گیا۔ کریس اینڈ وین لیوین (۱۹۹۶ء) کے تجویز کردہ بصری ڈیزائن کے میٹا فنکشنز کے مطابق مطابق تجزیہ دو سطحوں پر کیا گیا جو کہ نظریاتی اور باہمی ہیں۔ نظریاتی سطح پر، پانچ موضوعات ابھرے جنہیں اعتماد، گلیمر، محرومی، احتجاج، اور ہراساں کرنے والی تصاویر کے طور پر درجہ بندی کیا گیا۔ اعتماد اور گلیمر کے موضوعات والی تصاویر کی تعداد محرومی، ایذا رسانی اور احتجاج کے موضوعات کے مقابلے میں نمایاں طور پر زیادہ تھی اگرچہ وہ مضامین کی روزمرہ زندگی سے قریب ترین تعلق رکھتی ہیں۔ باہمی سطح پر، یہ دلچسپ ہے کہ

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زیادہ تر تصاویر نے موضوع اور ناظرین کے درمیان براہ راست نظر کا رابطہ برقرار رکھا ہے اور اس طرح ایک باہمی تعلق پیدا ہوتا ہے۔ ایک بڑی بے ضابطگی جس کا مشاہدہ کیا گیا تھا وہ مرد ٹرانسجینڈر کو مکمل طور پر خارج کرنے کا حوالہ دیتا ہے، جو علامتی فنا کا ایک اور معاملہ ہے۔

کلیدی الفاظ:ٹرانسجینڈر نمائندگی، اخبارات،ملٹی موڈل تجزیہ

Introduction

The issue of media visibility of transgender individuals is an ongoing issue not just in Pakistan but all over the world (Vanlee, et al., 2018). According to Hill and Helmers (2004) images are the most effective medium to "stir up strong emotions" therefore, the present study was aimed at exploring how transgenders are being represented in the print media to identify what messages were being propagated.

In more developed countries the representation of transgenders and queers has improved significantly towards greater visibility and a relatively more nuanced coverage (Capuzza, & Spencer, 2017), the same cannot be said for a conservative developing country like Pakistan. Also although the digital media is offering wonderful opportunities to the transgender youth to create a space for themselves (Cavalcante, 2016) yet in a country like Pakistan, with its low literacy rate and the negative attitude of the public towards non-conforming children making them leave school, the digital world becomes inaccessible. In such a situation newspapers and television are the only way to use media to create their identity. The present study was conducted via a multi modal analysis of photographs of trans-genders in the leading dailies of Pakistan. The study focused primarily on images as they can have a strong influence on the attitudes and perceptions of the viewers for a very long time (Hill & Helmers, 2004; Lester 2000).

In a country of over 200 million only 10418 have chosen to reveal their transgender identity (Basit et al., 2020). This appears to be way off the mark as literature suggests that individuals categorized as trans-genders (inclusive of cross dressers, intersex persons, masculine females, feminine males) amount to about 0.05% of the total population (Convey 2002) which suggests that perhaps there are ten million and definitely not ten thousand trans-genders in Pakistan. The reason for this drastic difference in numbers is because people do not come out due to the discriminations faced at all levels of society starting from the home and family right up to the state. Literature from all over the world suggests that transgenders not only face discrimination, harassment and humiliation (Butler, 2004; Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018) but also physical abuse, coercion and violence (Khan et. al, 2008). Although a multitude of factors create the environment for these discriminations yet a major role has been played by the media which tends to sensationalize and misrepresent the issues of this community (Keo-Meier & Labuski,

2013) or even portray them as perverts or freaks (Meyerowitz, 2004).

Review of Literature

Transgender Representation

The term transgender is used for those individuals who live and identify as another gender from their birth gender such as trans-males (female to male) or trans-female (male to female). These also include individuals who have undergone sex reassignment surgery or received other hormonal treatments (Butler, 2004).

Representation about trans-genders mainly becomes problematic due to the identity crises being faced them (Jun, 2010; Levitt & Ippolitto, 2014) as well as the societal refusal to embrace an unstable, indefinite existence (Pieper, 2015; Serano, 2007). Transgenders alongside other marginalized individuals need positive role models especially on the media but they are not provided with this opportunity (Bird et al., 2012). Cappuza & Spencer (2017) contend that the media can provide a major support for transgenders by creating greater visibility, embodiment, identity and social interaction. However, the reality is completely the opposite, in a study on transgenders as news sources, it was revealed that they are not only underrepresented but also stereotyped and their voice is limited qualitatively as well as quantitatively (Cappuza, 2015).

Further, even though the media frequently tries to show transgender characters but their representation is such that they are not accepted amongst the transgender community itself (Humphrey, 2016;Morrison, 2010; Pham et al., 2020). Also there have been observations (Kermode & Trans Media Watch, 2010) regarding patterns of misrepresentation whereby the media resorts to transphobia and mis-gendering in order to create interesting stories. It is also interesting that the media has created certain stereotypes for trans-genders such as those of the monster or the mammy (Ryan, 2009). Another common image is that of ridicule and humiliation (Lester, 2015) or that of being pathetic (Booth 2011; Serano, 2007) or deceptive (Ryan, 2009; Serano, 2007). Serano (2007) also pointed out that the stereotype of the deceiver is the most common mainly because of the transgenders ability to pass of as females is taken to be threatening.

Researchers (Booth, 2011; Cavalcante, 2013; Gillig et al., 2017) contend that depiction of trans characters on mainstream media has a very positive effect in terms of the perception of the audiences which can become more accepting. Further, it has also been observed that just as positive portrayal has a positive effect; negative portrayal has been seen to have very negative consequences (Ringo, 2002).When discussing representation it is important to acknowledge that mere visibility is not the sole ideal. It has been observed that greater visibility can at times lead to greater marginalization and stereotyping rather

than creating avenues for inclusion (Barnhurst, 2007; Creech, 2020; Koch-Rein, Yekani & Verlinden, 2020).

Theory & Method

Multimodal Analysis

The approach used for the present study was multimodal primarily because communication is invariably always multimodal and as such each of the modes has the potential to provide a great deal of information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Further, the design elements hidden in the images contain hidden as well as overt meanings (Babaii et al., 2016; Iedema, 2003; Unsworth, 2008).

An earlier form of the multimodal analysis was developed by Halliday (1985) and involved the analysis of colour, perspective, distance, composition and framing. However, the analytical approach developed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) has been found to be more relevant to the present research.

The approach works on multiple levels the first of which is the ideational which refers to the relationship between the people, settings and the objects depicted in the images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The relationship in the images can be indicated by gestures, eye-contact, bodies and limbs, all of which indicate a direction and are called vectors. The more center figures in the images are called “Actors” and their involvement with other people or things can be transactional or non-transactional. Non-transactional images have only one main character while transactional images have more than one main character where the central character is the actor while the other one or ones are the goal (Babaii et al., 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The next level of investigation involved in a multimodal analysis is the interpersonal. At this level the interaction between the people in the image and their viewers is analyzed primarily with the help of three things, the gaze, the angle and the distance (Iedema, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The first of these, the gaze refers to the eye-line formed by the main actor, looking straight at the camera denotes confidence while looking away from the camera turns the subjects into inanimate objects put up for scrutiny (Babaii et al., 2016; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002). The angle of the gze reveals the inherent power structures between the subject and the viewer (Babaii et al., 2016; Iedema, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) while the distance between the subjects and the viewer indicates the levels of trust and intimacy (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Moebius, 1986; Nodelman, 1999).Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001) have pointed out that the truth of a visual emerges from the depth, focus as well as the colours of the image. However, it is the colours in the image which

provide unity to the messages and link all the elements together as they contain many contextual messages (Kress, 2009).

Sample

For the purpose of the present research data was collected from two leading print dailies of Pakistan which are the flagship publications of the two largest and oldest media houses, namely *Daily Jang* and *Dawn* for a two year period from January 1st 2017 till December 31st 2018. Both newspapers have separate editions being published from all leading cities of Pakistan. For the purpose of the present research, only the capital city Islamabad's edition was manually explored. All photographs depicting and identifying transgenders were analysed for the purpose of the research. The sample was collected by analysing the caption or the corresponding story which identified the subjects as being transgenders.

The newspaper *Daily Jang* is owned and operated by the biggest media house of the country, the Jang Group. It is also the newspaper with the highest circulation in Pakistan and being an Urdu language newspaper is more popular amongst the masses (Hameed, Iqbal & Warriach, 2018). Owned by the Herald Group, the *Daily Dawn* is one of the most prestigious English newspapers of the country, with the second highest circulation in the category of English language dailies (the first being *The News* from the Jang Group).

Findings

The most striking finding of the present research was the absolute lack of images of transgender individuals during the two year period in the *Daily Jang,* a newspaper with the highest circulation in Pakistan. This strongly supports the notion of symbolic annihilation as proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976). On the other hand, *Dawn* published thirty such pictures which puts it in a significantly more positive position.

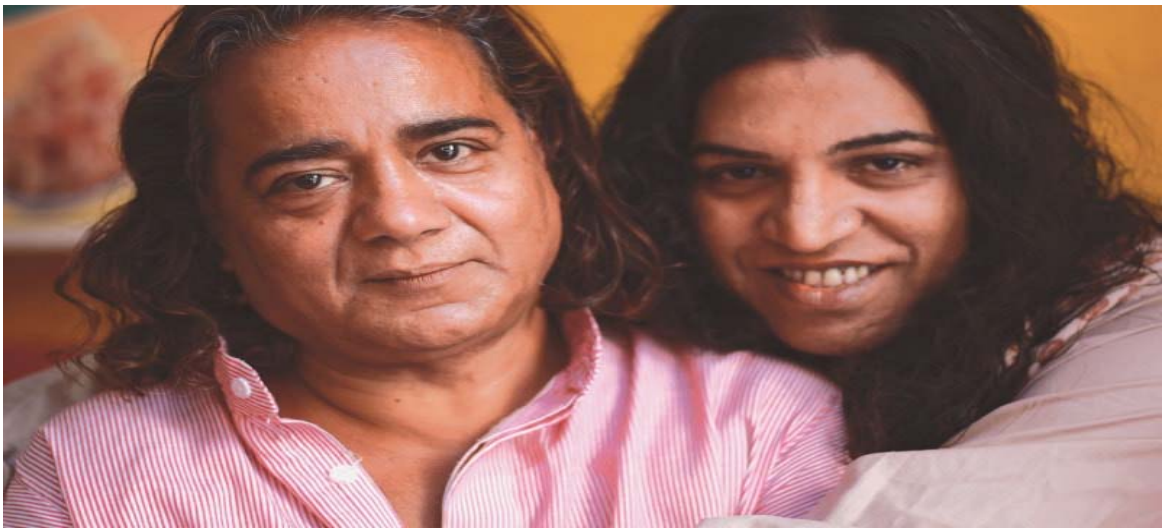
For the purpose of the present research the authors have categorized all the images found in *Dawn* according to five themes which encapsulate the messages being propagated. These include images depicting confidence, glamour, poverty, protests/activism and harassment. Images which are deemed to depict confidence show the transgenders as a central figure in the image with a direct gaze either at the camera or other subjects in the image. The facial expressions, body language and proxemics show the transgender subjects as being confident of themselves and their surroundings.

Images which were deemed to be glamorous show the transgender subjects in hyper feminized manner corresponding more to the standard female beauty ideal of slimness and fairness prevailing in the region. Thus, there are under-laying elements of what scholars (Ryan, 2009; Serano, 2007) call deception as the subjects bear closer resemblance to young females. Interestingly, this notion of deception takes on multiple meaning as the fair

skinned, light haired, light eyed subjects look not just like youthful females but European females as in Pakistan alongside many other South Asian countries with a colonial past, the beauty ideal looks more like a white European than a brown Asian.
Images corresponding to the themes of poverty show the real lives of the majority of the subjects who are shown to be present in bleak surroundings. The last category is that of harassment which pertains to the display of intimidation or aggression towards the transgender subjects. Although massive literature (Butler, 2004; Khan et al., 2008; Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018) from all over the world suggests that transgender individuals have to face a lot of harassment in their daily lives, yet this phenomenon found the least prevalence in the sample.

The analysis was conducted on three levels according to the meta functions of the visual design which are ideational, interpersonal and textual which research (Babaii et al., 2016; Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Lemke, 2009; Lim, 2007; Liu & O'Halloran, 2009; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002) suggests gives meaning to the elements in the images. The ideational depiction of transgenders in the images mainly referred to the patterns of representation through the relationships and interactions between all the elements in the image. This was done primarily because although these images are showing a version of reality but this reality is also the opinion or standpoint of the institution which has produced those images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In this regard, as mentioned earlier, the themes and patterns which emerged were categorized into five groups, mainly, confidence, glamour, poverty, protests/activism and harassment. A single image was than selected for in-depth analysis from each of these five categories which provided the clearest indication of the theme.

Image 1
Published on 5th March 2017 in Daily Dawn



Without the glare of judgment or bias, Neeli Naz (right) and her guru Gogi find a moment of peace at home

Out of the 30 images in the *Dawn* Newspaper, 16 can be categorized as images of confidence mainly because of the posture, gaze and positioning of transgender individuals present in it. *Image 1* is a clear example of this theme which depicts two transgender individuals Neeli and her mentor/Guru Gogi looking directly at the camera. The caption reads "Without the glare of judgment or bias, Neeli Naz (right) and her guru Gogi find a moment of peace at home", the caption thus identifies their relationship as that of a "Guru" (mentor) and a "Chela" (follower). In the social context of the sub-continent including Pakistan, whenever a transgender child is born, he/she is handed over to the transgender community in the middle of the night and the family (even the mother in some cases) is informed that the child has died during childbirth. The child is thus denied the right to the name, property and affection of his parents. The child is looked after by an older transgender whom the child calls Guru while the adoptee is known as the chela. The relationship between the guru and chela is thus a substitute for the parent child bond. The obvious display of affection indicates the bond that they share and the relationship that they have created in the midst of all their losses. The caption calls this a moment of peace acknowledging that such moments of calmness and joy are a rarity in the lives of the transgenders.

In line with Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2006) ideas about the vectors or lines of energy, the dominant theme of the image is that of confidence as there is direct eye contact with the viewer and lack of self-consciousness on the part of the individuals. The direct eye-level camera angle and close-up of the faces involves the viewers and the participants are not put up as objects for sympathy or empathy but command the viewer's attention. The

short distance between the viewer and the subject suggests trusts and intimacy while the relaxed and calm expressions on their faces denotes a positive energy, joy and happiness. With the simple attire and lack of makeup or accessories both the individuals could be normative hetero-sexual males. It is only the displayed intimacy and the caption which informed the reader of their gender. The most salient portions of the images are the faces of Neeli and Gogi and no other elements is placed for the focus of the viewer. The methodologies developed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) dictate that the image be considered as a transactional image, however there is no single actor and both the subjects equally share the central position. Also, the vectors are formed directly with the viewer and not between the subjects bringing greater intimacy to the scene.

Image 2
Published on 25th February 2017 in Daily Dawn



Rimal pictured with Sheheryar Munawar

There were six images in the sample where the transgender individuals were unnecessarily being glamourized. Of these *image 2* is a clear example. The caption and the accompanying story besides the image identifies the subject on the left as being an upcoming trans-model Rimmel Ali standing alongside a popular film actor Shehreyar Munawar. The upward

angle of the camera is clearly depicting both in a positive light. The obvious feminine grace of Rimmel corresponds to the female beauty ideals in Pakistan which prefer slimness alongside fairness. The upward angle of the camera puts forth the subjects on a pedestal and the situation of the model is equated with the super star imparting the same position and power to both. The trans-female is granted the same status as the male and the latter is given no special consideration inspite of being rich and popular alongside being male. Rimmel is attired in casual sportswear and appears to have just stepped back from a workout routine, while the actor Shehreyar Munawar is more formally attired. Although both the subjects are looking into the camera yet the smile of the hero Shehryar Munawar exudes confidence while Rimmel's gesture and expressions indicate demureness. At the same time the black masculine top of the male hero and the bright red fitted top provide indications of masculinity and femininity respectively. This image like *image 1* is also a transactional image with two main actors. The image is longshot which takes in many details from the surroundings which indicate that the venue appears to be a stage or a studio with a wooden stage and curtains in the background, however, there aren't any elements which take away focus from the subjects. The distance of the camera provides a clue to the relationship between the subjects which literature (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Moebius, 1986; Nodelman, 1999) suggests is an impersonal one.

The picture appears to have been taken during the rehearsals of a star-studded mainstream romantic comedy "*Saat Din Muhabbat in"* (Gaur & Nabi, 2018) which translates to "Find love in seven days" where the lead protagonist Munawar in his quest for true love attends a sensual dance performance by Rimmel Ali at the end of which she is attacked by goons. When the hero comes to the rescue, the villain remarks that Rimmel cannot be the true love of Munawar as she is not a real women and tells him to leave, however, Munawar does not let them kidnap Rimmel and fights with the goons. Sadly, the situation in the film actually became a reality when Rimmel was kidnapped for real (Tribune, 7 January 2021) where she was subjected to humiliation and torture however, no real life hero was there to protect her. The kidnapping and torture of Rimmel is particularly problematic as she is obviously very attractive and it is perhaps her closeness to normative beauty ideals that perhaps led to her predicament as previous literature (Ryan, 2009; Serano, 2007) suggests that the stereotype of transgenders as deceivers is considered to be the most threatening.

Image 3

Published on 17th August 2017 in Daily Dawn



Kajal, 25, has a heartbreaking story to tell. "A man saw me dancing at a wedding and fell in love with me. He wanted to marry me. I liked him too, but I knew I couldn't give him children and his family would never have accepted me, so I said no. He came after me here, right outside my house. He grabbed my hair and chopped it off, then he beat me. Everyone in the neighbourhood watched but no one came to my assistance."

Out of the total 30 images, only four depict the actual poverty and rejection present in the everyday lives of the transgender individuals in Pakistan. These images of deprivation can also be called the real images as they are truly reflective of the reality of actual transgender lives in Pakistan, the non-glamorous appearance, poverty, and aging are the realities of the everyday lives of trans individuals, all quite further away from the glamourous world visible in *image 2*. *Image 3* shows a mature transgender (male to female) who is holding a mirror in the left hand while applying the lipstick with the right hand. The image is an eye-level medium shot which contains plenty of empty spaces in the background giving clue to the life of the subject. The dupatta (long scarf used to cover the head and/or chest and worn over a shalwar/trouser and kameez/tunic), the red shalwar and the bright bangles are the epitomes of feminine attire in Pakistan. The gaunt appearance and complete oblivious-ness to surroundings provide clear indications to the life of poverty and destitution. The eyes are turned towards the mirror being held in the hand and the gaze of the subject is not directed at the viewer nor at another human being but is rather inversed upon herself. Although the eyes are towards the mirror which is the goal in the image yet it is obvious that the subject is looking at her own image, thus the subject is both the actor and the goal. Although the subject is the main actor in the image yet the fact that its gaze is not directed towards the camera puts it up as an inanimate object (Babaii et al., 2016; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002).

The caption narrates the sad background of the image. The sense of deprivation is heightened by the caption which tells the story of unfulfilled love combined with maniacal hate. The stark contrast in the treatment meted out to the subject from a proposal of marriage to merciless beating perhaps truly encapsulate the everyday reality of life as a trans woman.

In the image, the empty spaces visible in the background, a blank wall and a shabby bright coloured carpet can be seen. There is no seating arrangement or decorative object while an end of ill-fitting curtain can be seen in a corner in a striking dark green colour. Also some random objects such as handbags and shopping bags can also be seen. Both the angle of the camera as well as the distance from the camera take the viewer into the intimate space of the subject where she herself is not aware of being placed like an object. Although the image is an example of a non-transactional image as defined by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) with the main subject as the actor yet the subject is disempowered both because of its context- being a marginalized transgender belonging to the lower class- but also because of the way the subject has been presented. Although the subject occupies a central position in the image yet the lack of agency on the part of the subject shows that it is upto the camera or the viewer to take in whatever they want from image. The image has been framed in such a manner that there is much empty space which has consciously not been cropped. This perhaps is a subtle message by the photographer whereby a parallel has been drawn between the empty spaces and the empty lives of the subjects. There is significant modality in the image as it is a sharp, clearly focused image where nothing is hidden or even tidied up for the sake of the camera or the viewer. Some researchers (Booth 2011; Serano, 2007) consider such images as being pathetic pandering to the sympathy of the viewer which is true in a sense but does not take away from the fact that they do represent the reality.

Image 4
Published on August 21st2018 in Daily Dawn



Transgender persons stage a protest demonstration outside the Peshawar Press Club on Monday against growing incidents of violence against their community.

In all there were three photographs which were showing protests by transgender community. The three images of protest are all surrounding the incidence of violence against transgenders; however, a reading of the accompanying story indicated that all the violent actions were acts of jealousy and not due to a bias or prejudice on the part of the perpetrators. The images themselves are like any other image of protest with placards, raised hands and aggrieved expressions. *Image 4* is the clearest image out of the three, the others being long shots of large groups. The caption of the image reads "Transgender persons stage a protest demonstration outside the Peshawar Press Club on Monday against growing incidents of violence against their community". Interestingly, without the caption, it would have been difficult to identify the subjects as being transgenders. The only clue the audience gets about the non-normative nature of the subjects is the exaggerated display of emotions such as anger; behaviour which is considered out of place even for a mature females in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

The text on the banner reads "where should we go for our protection?" a questions being put before the authorities, state representatives and civil society. In the image a transgender individual is placed in the central position and clear vectors are formed by her raised wide spread arms. The gestures and body language of the central mature transgender indicate that she is willing to stop the violence and discrimination on her own. Although the central subject is not making eye contact with the camera yet the upward camera angle and the posture of the main subject indicate authority and agency which belie the context of the accompanying story or the banners and placards visible in the image. Further, the angle and distress visible on the face of the main subject corresponds to the sombre black kameez/shirt of the main actor in the image. The black dress indicative of the mourning for those who lost their lives while the white dupatta/ scarve indicative of purity and piety.

There are multiple other individuals which can be seen in the background. Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996) consider these secondary subjects to be the locative circumstances which are helpful in providing context to the central subject. Various faces and limbs can be seen cut off from their respective bodies, all the arms raised in protest and anger or holding a banner or a placard. All the subjects excluding one appear to be male to female transgenders while the single individual at the corner of the image appears to be a male. The vectors in the image effectively divide it into many triangular shapes each containing its share of disjointed limbs. All the vectors converge on the central figure of the main subject, the actor and the message of horror and despair is further enhanced. There is also considerable informational value in the image such that a major part of the image is taken over by the banner headline whose text gives a greater clue to the context than any other aspect of the image.

The image is a medium shot taken at an upward angle of the camera. The upward gaze of the camera places a great deal of significance on the subjects setting them in a position of power and authority. The camera angle compels the viewer to feel in awe of the subjects and there is no sense ofdisempowermenteven though there is no direct eye contact with the camera.

Image 5
Published on 5 March 2017 in Daily Dawn



Harassment of transgender on the street is normalised to a large extent

All transgenders are outcasts, any kind of deviance from heteronormativity is not acceptable and the only time common everyday people interact with transgenders (only male to female) is on the roads where they can be seen begging for alms. A common myth in the subcontinent being that the curse of a transgender can ruin a person leads to plenty of alms being available. However, begging on the streets is not an easy task, as can be seen in *image 5*, there is plenty of humiliation and harassment. The caption of the image clearly establishes the context of the image but what is fascinating is that the most common occurrence was actually the least visible in the media representations, with this single image being the only one showing how transgenders are viewed and treated by the general public.

The interaction between the male and the transgender cannot be considered to be a reactional process, rather it is a clear action process with the male being the actor while the transgender is the goal. Clear vectors are formed by the outstretched arms of the male who is openly harassing without any fear or apprehension. There are plenty of onlookers acting as a circumstance with some openly leering as well but the casualness with which this aspect is treated by all shows the general apathy of the populace. The image is a

medium shot taken at the eye level. The gaze, angle and distance of the subjects from the camera takes the viewer into their very surroundings with the viewer too becoming an apathetic onlooker to the situation. The confident smirk on the face of the harasser and the lowered gaze and self-conscious posture of the transgender gives clear indication of the imbalance in power relations.

The transgender individual who is the goal in the image is attired in a black dress which is a colour of mourning. The dreariness of the dress is reduced somewhat by the light blue embroidered border on the sleeve but the dullness of the dress is not reduced by it. The open hair, makeup and physical aspects of the transgender are such that she could easily have passed for a woman, but in Pakistan a male stopping a female in such a public place would have resulted in serious repercussions for the harasser but because it is a transgender none of the onlookers are perturbed. In fact they appear to be enjoying the scene and would have gladly participated even in the act of harassment. Surprisingly, even the presence of the camera has not deterred the individual although interactions with transgenders by males is looked down upon in a conservative society like Pakistan. The picture is a testament to the observations from all over the world (Butler, 2004; Khan, et al., 2008; Lester, 2015; Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018) regarding the harassment and humiliation faced by the transgenders on a daily basis.

Discussion

Pakistani society is plagued by ignorance and conservative mind-sets which has reduced the sphere of any individual who does not conform to the norm. Many researchers believe that the general public's perception about transgenders being perverts, freaks or criminals is partially as a result of the way media depicts them (Butler, 2004; Meyerowitz, 2004) and in a similar vein their absence from the public's eye can also be a cause for the hostile and discriminatory behaviour.

Out of the five images which were being analysed only the first one can be deemed to be a healthy positive portrayal. Images depicting happy and confident individuals will go a long way in building positive perceptions amongst the populace. Another positive aspect observed in the sample pertained to the angle of the camera. In none of the images the subjects were objected to the lowered gaze of the camera which research (Babaii et al., 2016; Iedema, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) suggests denotes the subject's weak position. Thus, at least the photographers and in turn the media has displayed a certain level of sensitivity which can have positive outcomes.

Thankfully, most of the stereotypes created for mainstream fictional media as observed by Ryan (2009) such as those of monster or mammy were not visible in the sample. However, there were six photographs in which the transgender individuals who were the focus of attention conformed to the conventional female beauty ideals of Pakistan accompanied by the seemingly innocent caption which needlessly indicated the gender of the individuals. It is this dichotomy between the appearances of normative ideals and negating captions which marks them as being deceivers. Thus, it is not just fictional media that paints transgenders as deceivers but even news media is following the stereotype.

A very significant finding of the research was the symbolic annihilation of transgenders in the leading Urdu daily of Pakistan. Here it is important to note that Urdu daily is the preferred media outlet of the masses while *Daily Dawn* in English is the preferred media of the elite opinion makers of the country (Hameed et al., 2018). Historically, the west inspired educated elite tend to have a more liberal viewpoint which is also reflected in their media choices. On the other hand the Urdu dailies reflect the more right wing conservative approach of their primary readership. In this context the complete absence in the Urdu daily and relatively nuanced portrayal in the English daily indicates that Fairclough (1989) was right in asserting that the real meaning is the selection (or absence in this case) which contains hidden meanings.

It is important to note that the symbolic annihilation was actually observed on two levels, although there were a few images depicting transgenders in the English language daily yet interestingly all the images were those of male to female transgenders and there was complete absence of female to male transgenders. This suggests that it is perhaps the misogynistic and patriarchal society of Pakistan which can accept deviance in a male but not allow opportunity for deviance in females. The males can act as females without misbalancing the social structures but a female can never dress up or act as a male. Gazzola & Morrison (2014) had found that media depiction of female to male transgenders was not as negative as that of the MTF transgenders. However, in this instance the Pakistani society appears to be different as there is complete absence of FTM from not just the media but also in public life.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The representation of transgender individuals in the Pakistani press has been found to be relatively sensitive. The gaze, angle and distance between the camera and subject did not place the transgender subjects in a weak position. However, in-depth analysis revealed some interesting anomalies. Firstly, the portrayal of transgenders in accordance with the feminine normative beauty standards leaves out the possibility of acceptance for the ordinary individuals who do not correspond to those ideals. Also, the real life problems

being faced by transgenders such as poverty, discrimination and harassment were not frequently displayed.

The most striking finding of the present research was the absolute lack of images of transgender individuals during the two year period of the Urdu language newspaper the *Daily Jang,* which has the highest circulation in Pakistan. This strongly supports the notion of symbolic annihilation as proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976). Another more serious instance of symbolic annihilation was the absolute exclusion of female to male transgenders or trans-males. Interestingly Butler (2004) observed that female to male transgenders are more visible as it is easier to be a male in society than a female. But this situation wasfound to be completely reversed here.

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Dr. Qurrat-ul-Ann Malik is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Media & Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Dr. Aniqa Ali is Lecturer in the Department of Media & Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Ms. Sumbal Fahad is Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Media & Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.