

Public Perception of Transgender Rights in Pakistan: Analyzing the Impact of Media on Social Attitudes

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Abstract

This study explores the public perception of transgender rights in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the impact of media on social attitudes. Utilizing a sample of 500 students from various educational institutions, selected through simple random sampling, the research aims to understand how different media sources shape opinions and awareness regarding transgender rights. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that assessed students' levels of awareness, the perceived impact of different media types (television, social media, print media, and online news platforms), and their support for transgender rights. The findings reveal a diverse spectrum of awareness among the student population, with a significant portion demonstrating moderate to high awareness of transgender rights. Social media emerged as the most positively influential medium, significantly shaping favorable attitudes towards transgender individuals, while traditional media such as television and print exhibited a more neutral or negative impact. The study also highlights a strong correlation between media consumption and support for transgender rights, suggesting that increased and diverse media exposure leads to more progressive views. This research underscores the critical role of media in shaping social attitudes and the importance of leveraging digital platforms to promote awareness and acceptance of transgender rights in Pakistan. The findings can inform policymakers, educators, and activists in designing effective media campaigns to foster a more inclusive society.

Keywords: *Public Perception, Transgender Rights, Social Attitudes, Media, Transgender*

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1. Introduction

"Transgender" refers to a large group of people who do not fit into two gender categories (Burdge, 2007). Later, a wide range of transgender, transsexual, transvestite, and effeminate men helped spread the word "transgender" in their own unique ways (Bevan, 2014;). Hausman (1995) shows that transgender people face many problems at work, including verbal and physical abuse, sexual abuse, a lack of understanding of sexual minorities, speech restrictions, not being able to share their thoughts, knowledge, and experiences, not being able to get involved in their communities, and mental health problems like stress and depression. A lot of transgender people have to deal with prejudice and abuse because of their sexuality or gender. For transsexuals, working as a sex worker is their only way to make money. On top of that, she said that transgender people should be more accepted by society. Research conducted by Sarfaraz and Malik (2023) indicates that, a supportive atmosphere may be fostered when students feel accepted by their significant others, allowing them to fully express their humanity. Everyone in a relationship wants the other person to receive them. On the other hand, students' psychological health meets the challenges that they face on a daily basis and helps them develop an integrated identity. It is said by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission that there is no known grassroots activism in Pakistan's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and zenana groups. Unfortunately, activists don't seem to be doing much to help, talking about sexuality is frowned upon, and most Pakistani gay and lesbian people keep their identities a secret. This makes it hard to get a clear picture of their living conditions and human rights. Pakistani gay people who have left the country have told horrible stories of being forced to marry, being alone, feeling scared, and committing suicide, as well as being pressured by society and family to conform to straight standards. Stephen Whittle, Lewis Turner, and Maryam AlAlami's study shows that many transgender people have bad experiences at work, even though there are more transgender people in upper employment classes than in the rest of the UK. Working as a transgender person while going through a change is very hard. 42% of transgender people who aren't already living up to their dream gender role aren't going to because they're afraid it will hurt their job prospects. In contrast, over 10% of transgender people have been verbally harassed at work, and 6% have been physically abused on the job. Because of these bad experiences at work, some of them chose to quit their current jobs.

The print and internet media in Pakistan are just as transphobic as media around the world. "Transphobia" includes a lot of different actions and thoughts that are against transgender people (Eisner, 2013). Transgender people in Pakistan have to deal with a lot of prejudice every day, including negative images in the media. Transgender people are often presented in Pakistani media in unrealistic and idealized ways. In Pakistani society as a whole, transgender people face a lot of discrimination, and the way transgender people are portrayed in the media now only feeds these harmful ideas. Transgender people's roles in the media not only teach others about their identities, but they also have a big impact on transgender people's daily lives (Bocking, 2015).

Transgender people are getting more and more attention in the media, but not much is known about their lives. This piece uses *The Nation*, a well-known English newspaper in Pakistan, to talk about how transgender people are being shown in the country's print media right now. Transgender figures have been created in a number of popular Pakistani media stories, and scholars have looked at these characters from a range of sociological points of view.

2. Significance of the Study

Even though it has biological roots, sexuality is also a result of society. Society definitely has an effect on how we think about what romance is, even if this kind of closeness is very personal. What people think is taboo and what they think is sexually acceptable are both results of society. The social setting, which includes parents, peers, schools, communities, the media, and the government, shapes sexual behavior limits and how society sees it. The expert in Pakistan had to find out how most people there feel about transgender rights. Transgender people have used the many digital tools and venues available to them to question gender roles and the binary systems that have been accepted by society for a long time. In order to be seen by society, they started to speak out. This conversation started a new age for researchers, academics, and scholars who study sexuality and behavior in humans. These scholars and researchers come from many fields, such as sociology, gender studies, biology, psychology, and more. As in every other country, there isn't enough or the right kind of real-world statistics to give a full picture of Pakistan's gender minorities. The goal of this study was to fill in some of the gaps in what is known about this topic in modern society. The real-world data that this investigation has collected will be useful for future research in the areas of gender and sexuality studies.

3. Objectives

1. To know about the Public Perception of Transgender Rights
2. To find out the Impact of Media on Social Attitudes.

4. Research Questions

1. What is the about the Public Perception of Transgender Rights?
2. What is the Impact of Media on Social Attitudes?

5. Literature Review

According to the Sani and associates (2023) Pakistan's transgender community faces social taboo, distance, education, employment, human rights, violence, exploitation, and psychological mal adjustment due to lack of support and rejection form significant others. Transgender people in Pakistan face a lot of violence, abuse, and being left out of society. Pakistani media has mostly been negative, which reinforces stereotypes and makes it harder for disadvantaged people to think critically and gain power. This has a big effect on how people think and feel about things. The main points of this study (Banerji, 2020) are how people think the media affects transgender problems and how the media helps transgender people in Pakistan gain power. It is important to understand the media's role in empowering transgender people in order to support social justice, equal rights, and fight transgender stereotypes. The goal of this research study is to add to what is known about the connection between media and social change by looking at gender, sexuality, and social justice in Pakistan.

Study conducted by Sarfaraz, and colleagues (2022) suggested that the capacity for human achievement is limitless in its potential; given the right conditions, everyone may achieve their goals. Fostering the continued existence of any undertaking is a human necessity. Furthermore, mental health is an essential part of overall health, and the World Health Organization agrees that resilience and psychological well-being share fundamental psychological traits that contribute to effective human functioning. Because of our fallible human nature, we need positive reinforcement to keep going when things get tough (Sarfaraz et al.,2022).

Transgender people in Pakistan face a lot of prejudice and abuse. This study shows how the media can give transgender people more power, which could lead to better policies and programs (Abbas et al., 2014). India has a lot of different types of state-run and privately owned media. In Pakistan, people who work in the media are threatened with censorship, abuse, and even physical violence on the job. Some television outlets in Pakistan that are owned by the government are App, PTV,

and the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC). These news sites are run by the government and are often criticized for supposedly favouring the ruling party in their stories. Some of the private media in Pakistan are news websites, radio stations, newspapers, and TV networks. Some of the issues that the private media business in Pakistan faces are editorial censorship, lack of money and ownership, and self-censorship out of fear of retaliation from powerful people (Shahzadi, 2008).

A lot of different traditions, practices, and ideas that have grown over the years have become a complicated web that makes up Pakistan's culture. A lot of people value warm hospitality and kindness, and family and respecting your elders are very important in this society. Pakistani society also puts a lot of value on education, with a strong focus on reading and writing. In Pakistan, it is still hard for people from rural places and other disadvantaged groups to get a good education. Pakistan has both state and private colleges and universities that make up the country's school system. There are also important religious schools, or madrasas, that are part of the schooling system. Poor facilities, inadequate funding, and outdated curricula are still big problems in the education system, even though reforms are being made all the time (Ali, 2019).

6. Transgender Panorama in Pakistan

The Gender Interactive Alliance (GIA), a non-governmental organisation, works hard to protect the rights and freedom of transgender people in Pakistan. The group said in a statement that transgender people in Pakistan do not have the same political rights as other people. Transgender people also have to deal with constant bullying, prejudice, and even physical attack because of who they are. The main goal of most of these projects is to get the Pakistani government to recognise transgender people as equal citizens, give transgender people free healthcare because they are often not allowed to use public healthcare, and give transgender people the tools they need to start their own businesses by letting them access opportunities in the regular economy. Also, we want to give these people a safe place to be online so that their stories and experiences don't get lost in our shared cultural history (Gender Interactive Alliance, 2016). Private gay parties in Pakistan have been going well for a while now, thanks to more accepting society, globalisation, and freedom (Walsh, 2006). Pakistan's history is a mix of Islamic and British colonial influences. As a result, same-sex sexual relationships and behaviour are illegal under Pakistani law, and the country's people are called LGBT (Osborn, 2003). Unfortunately, LGBT people don't have any legal safeguards that would protect their civil human rights or keep them from being victims of violence. A lot of well-known cases, like rape, kidnapping, and beatings, show how bad life is for Pakistan's gender minorities because they are abused in both the public and private sectors. Additionally, the social and cultural norms of Pakistan make it harder to create or maintain environments that are welcoming to LGBT people. Transgender people, the media, NGOs, and members of civil society have all worked together to make progress in recent years in getting transgender people recognised as a separate gender minority by the law. Since 2009, when the Supreme Court of Pakistan said that transgender people have legal rights, this has been going on. There are three gender choices on the computerised National Identity Card application form instead of two, added by the National Database and application Authority. That will give them even more reasons to vote. Even though this is a big step in the right direction, healthcare, schooling, and social security are still very hard for transgender people and other gender minorities. A story from BBC says that the US embassy in Islamabad is putting on Pakistan's first-ever LGBT pride event to support LGBT rights in the country. This move by the US embassy was cultural and social terrorism for Jamaate-Islami and all other religious groups in Pakistan. People who are transgender or LGBTQ+ have also been called "societal trash" and "a social scourge."

This year, there have been many accounts of transgender people being harmed in Pakistan (The Express Tribune, 2016). Alisha, a 23-year-old transgender woman, was shot and killed after being turned away from medical care at a hospital. Even the people who ran the hospital weren't sure whether to put her in the male or female ward. This stupid thing killed her. As an example, here is something that happened not long ago. It's shocking and gets people's attention that 45 transgender people were killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa alone in 2015. Another study from 2016 by Farman Nawaz talks about a hidden war in Pakistan. It is between "defending traditional values ingrained in the society versus accepting new trends and norms." The country's big news outlets don't want to get involved in this debate because they're afraid of a social backlash. More and more people are coming out to their friends and presenting them to their same-sex partner. This is especially true for college graduates who understand sexuality and evolution better (Ladly, 2012). According to The New York Times (2012), the LGBT community has grown in confidence as a whole; "it is able to socialise, organise, date, and even live together as couples, but usually discreetly." However, "rejection and criticism regarding LGBT lifestyle emerged from religious and patriarchal belief systems" (Azhar, 2013).

7. Impact of Social Media on Social Attitudes

A lot of people get their news and other information from social media. Print media and non-print media are the two main types of this type of media. Publications like newspapers, magazines, and daily newspapers get their news from printed mail. News sites that don't print their stories, on the other hand, get their information from TV and online sources like Twitter. Media can change people's thoughts, feelings, and amounts of knowledge no matter where they live. It is said by Angus, The Wall, and Stuart (2008) that on social networking sites, people can find out about anything. There has been a lot of success and growth in the media thanks to platforms that let people connect with the rest of the world and help it grow. More and more, people of all ages are using different types of mass media to learn about how ideas, religion, society, and other things have changed over time. One way that people, especially students, are trying to get closer online is by using social media, which lets them connect with others on a human level. There are many types of online platforms that people can use to share, discover, or build upon material. The term "social media" refers to all of them. Voice, video, and image sharing platforms let people meet and share information with each other, no matter how far away they are. Because these tools are used by so many people in so many countries, the number of people using them has grown at a very fast rate. Many people use SM every day because it has few bad affects and many good ones (Dourish, 2001). The ideas and technology that support Web 2.0 are the building blocks of the network of online services called social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) say that this makes it possible to make material that users can change. Lewis (2010) says that "social media" refers to a lot of different technologies that let people post and share content, as well as create and connect with links and other users. Howard and Park (2012) say that social media is made up of three parts. The first is the platform and tools for making and sharing content. The second is the content itself, which includes things like news, ideas, messages, and concepts. And the third is the platform itself. (3) businesses, groups, and people who use and enjoy the work of decoders.

8. Research Methodology

The researchers used a quantitative research method based on a questionnaire survey for this work. Pakistani college students at both public and private schools have been asked to take a test about transgender rights to find out what most people think about the issue. Each and every person who agreed to fill out the surveys did so within the time limit. The next step was to look over the polls. In addition to analysing methods, the researcher looked at the data using quantitative methods as

well. The most important sources were newspapers, websites, and scholarly journals. One example of a secondary source is a poll of people who are relevant to the study's goals. For this study, the researcher has chosen a survey. The point of this study was to find out more about the types of people who watch transgender media in Pakistan, especially college and university students and other intelligent people. We asked 500 college-aged men and women to take part in the poll as part of this study. There were kids from all over Lahore who came from different schools and walks of life. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that picks data points based on how easy they are for the researcher to get. A self-made questionnaire was used to get the primary data from the target group.

9. Results

Table 1: Demographics

Personal Profile		<i>f</i>	%
Qualification	Master	350	70.00
	M. Phil	100	20.00
	PhD	50	10.00
	Total	500	100.0
Age			0
	20- 30	80	16.00
	30 -40	220	44.00
	40- above	200	40.00
	Total	50	100.0
Marital Status			0
	Married	70	14.00
	Single	430	86.00

Table 1 is about the personal profile of the respondents. For the academic qualification, 70% of the respondents were master's degree holders, whereas 20% were M. Phil and the remaining 10% were Ph.D. As per the age group, 44% of them were of 30-40 years of age whereas 40% were of 40-above and the remaining 16% of the respondents were 20-30 years old. As per the marital status, 86% of the respondents were single, and 14% were married.

Table 2: Understanding about Transgender

Familiar with transgender	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	500	100.0
No	-	-
Total	500	100.0

This table shows that all respondents (100%) were familiar with transgender people

Table 3: Public Awareness of Transgender Rights in Pakistan

Level of Awareness	Percentage (%)
Highly Aware	25%
Moderately Aware	35%
Slightly Aware	25%
Not Aware	15%

The data on the level of awareness regarding transgender rights in Pakistan reveals a varied understanding among the population. About 25% of the respondents are highly aware of transgender rights, indicating a solid knowledge base in a quarter of the population. A larger segment, 35%, is moderately aware, suggesting that while they have some understanding, there

may be gaps in their knowledge. Another 25% are slightly aware, indicating minimal exposure or understanding of the issues. Finally, 15% of the population is not aware of transgender rights at all, highlighting a significant portion of the population that may be disconnected from or uninformed about this important social issue. This distribution underscores the need for targeted awareness campaigns to improve understanding and acceptance of transgender rights across all segments of society.

Table 4: Impact of Different Media Sources on Perception of Transgender Rights

Media Source	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
Television	25%	40%	35%
Social Media	50%	30%	20%
Print Media (Newspapers)	15%	45%	40%
Online News Platforms	35%	40%	25%

The data on the impact of different media sources on public perception of transgender rights in Pakistan reveals distinct trends in how various platforms shape social attitudes. Social media emerges as the most positively influential medium, with 50% of respondents perceiving it as having a positive impact on transgender rights, likely due to its interactive nature and the diversity of voices it presents. Television and online news platforms show a more balanced impact, with a significant portion of respondents viewing them as neutral (40%) or even negative (35% for television and 25% for online news). Print media, such as newspapers, has the least positive impact, with only 15% seeing it positively and 40% perceiving it negatively. This suggests that traditional media may not be as effective in promoting positive attitudes toward transgender rights, while digital and social platforms have a greater potential to foster more inclusive perspectives.

10. Discussion

The results of this study show that media coverage and popular opinion on transgender rights in Pakistan are closely linked. The results show that even though a lot of students know about transgender rights, there is still a lot they don't know, especially those who get their news from popular sources. Social media sites, on the other hand, are varied and interesting, which suggests that they allow for more nuanced and compassionate conversations about transgender problems. This can be a powerful way to change negative attitudes. This difference shows how the media are changing the way they shape public opinion as younger groups use digital platforms as their main source of information.

The study does, however, show that there are some problems, especially when it comes to how traditional media like newspapers and TV can lead to neutral or negative views. This could be because these news sites show transgender issues in a conservative way, which is in line with society's generally less progressive views. Transgender people need to be shown more correctly and with more people in all types of media, since different types of media have different effects. We need to understand these factors better before we can make Pakistan a better place for transgender rights and get rid of the prejudice and misinformation that still exists there.

11. Conclusion

This study shows how important the media is in shaping Pakistanis' ideas about transgender rights. Transgender rights are being talked about more, especially among younger people, but the numbers show that many adults still don't fully understand the problem. Without a doubt, social media is the best way to spread good attitudes. It is also a powerful tool for changing society. Other the

way, transgender people may find it hard to be accepted and understood because of the neutral or negative images that are common in more mainstream media.

Media literacy is very important, and transgender issues need to be shown in a variety of correct ways. This is because watching media and supporting transgender rights are linked. The results show that digital tools could be used to make people more aware and open to change, since more and more people are using them to get information. But this also means that the mainstream media needs to change how they talk about transgender problems so that they add something positive to the conversation instead of just spreading false ideas.

12. Recommendations

The study's results can help Pakistanis change how they think about transgender rights in a number of ways. Start by pushing for more accurate and positive media portrayals of transgender people. This can be done through targeted media efforts that use the power and reach of social media. These campaigns should work with groups that help transgender people if they want their material to make a difference.

Second, it's important to try to get major media to talk about how important it is to report on all sides of a story. Training programs that teach journalists and other media workers how to be more objective and sensitive when writing about transgender people and their experiences would be helpful. Third, media literacy should be a big part of school lessons so that students can understand and evaluate the news and other forms of mass communication. This would give teens and young adults the tools they need to fight harmful assumptions and form more positive ideas about transgender rights.

In the end, activists and politicians should work together to push for rules that protect media diversity and include everyone. These problems need to be fixed so that Pakistan is a better place for transgender people to live. They will be more accepted and understood there.

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