

Dissecting discourse: transgender characters in Pakistani comedy shows through a Foucauldian Lens

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Abstract

This study delves into the comedic representations of transgender individuals in popular mainstream Pakistani TV sitcoms, taking the initiative to discover gender norms and examining the discourse of social change. Employing Foucauldian discourse analysis as a critical lens, the research explores the nuances of humor surrounding transsexuals, specifically in transvestite characterizations across various segments of television satire. The analysis encompasses of a snowball sample of five episodes from top-rated TV comedy shows, to scrutinize power structures, ideologies, and social critiques. The findings illuminate a significant shift, depicting transgender individuals in the limelight with a culturally authentic narrative, unrestricted access to equal opportunities, and a spectrum of new possibilities. In essence, this study will serve as a poignant ode to the resilience inherent in breaking societal molds, painting a compelling vision of a world where transgender individuals thrive; liberated from preconceived notions, and flourish in their authentic, unapologetic selves.

Keywords: Transgender, Comedy, Foucauldian Analysis, Gender Norms, Social Change

Article History:

Received: 05th Apr, 2023

Accepted: 26th May, 2023

Published: 11th Jun, 2023

1. Introduction

The term "Transgender" is used to refer to those individuals, whose inner gender identity (Duberman, 1997; Rēvati, 2010; Blank, 2012), which they sense, does not go with the sex, biological, or physical characteristics (Forcier et al., 2020), given by birth and do not fit the binary ideas of male and female (Miguel, et al., 2016; Khan, 2019; Williams, 2020). In Pakistan, commonly used words that refer to such individuals are "Hijra," "Shemale", "Chaka," and "Khawaja Sara," (Nanda, 1999) in terms of third gender, outdated, offensive, and inappropriate having specific cultural and regional connotations and may not align perfectly with the Western understanding of the term "transgender" (Davé, 2012; Pandea et al., 2020). In a society that holds a unique socio-cultural landscape, unfortunately, the transgender community is still identified with prejudices and particular cheeky meanings associated with them. Non-binary or genderqueer individuals (Halberstam & Halberstam, 2018; Tannehill, 2018; Green et al., 2019).

Transgender individuals (TIs) often confront pervasive discrimination, resulting in multifaceted socio-economic ramifications (Denson, 2020) and this systemic bias not only impedes their economic prospects but also precipitates profound social ramifications. The deleterious effects manifest across critical domains: educational pursuits become an uphill battle, safety is compromised due to prevailing prejudice, and health crises intensify amidst restricted access to inclusive healthcare services (Biegel, 2018; Khan, 2020; Au, 2022; Rousselle, 2020). Consequently, the intricate web of discriminatory practices weaves a complex cycle of socio-economic vulnerability that demands reparation through concerted efforts toward societal inclusivity (Nations, 2020).

Pakistan has witnessed commendable advancements in recognizing and safeguarding the rights of transgender individuals, indicative of the nation's commitment to fostering inclusivity (Kasmani, 2022; 2023). Notably, legislative reforms have been instituted to fortify the legal standing of the transgender community, exemplified by the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in May 2018 of that year (Transgender Persons, 2020; National Policy Framework on Human Rights, 2017). This pivotal legislation signifies a landmark achievement in extending essential rights and protections to KhawajaSara, intersex, third-gender, or "Khusra" individuals, allowing them access to fundamental documents such as driver's

licenses and passports (Duberman, 1997, Totman, 2011; Byrne, 2014; Joshi, 2016; Medicine et al., 2021). Moreover, the legal framework offers robust safeguards against harassment, both in public spaces and within homes, thereby addressing critical concerns related to the safety and well-being of transgender persons (Skidmore, 2019).

Moreover, the Act's provisions extend into the realm of criminal justice where legal punishments are administered, the legislation mandates the allocation of a separate room for transgender individuals, exemplifying a commitment to humane and respectful treatment within the legal system (Global Trends, 2021). These legal and societal measures collectively reflect a paradigm shift in Pakistan's approach toward transgender rights, marking a significant departure from historical marginalization (Duffy & Kelly, 2020) to a more inclusive and supportive socio-legal landscape (Kasmani, 2022). The burgeoning support for equal rights within the transgender community is not confined to legal realms alone; it resonates prominently in the expansive domain of mainstream media (The Media's Influence on Society, 2021). Media as a powerful societal influencer; an "extension of man" by McLuhan provides a foundational understanding of how "interconnectedness" by "medium shaping" causes normalization or reinforcement (2016) of certain social norms to gender (Hoffmann, 2002; Sharma & Singh, 2022; Shrum, 2012; Purnell & Fenkl, 2020; Von Goble, 2023; Goffman, 2023; Ikeya & Balée, 2023).

Furthermore, Shanzeh (2021) has illuminated the contemporary transformative power embedded within the intersection between comedy, social change, and the emancipation of marginalized communities. Undoubtedly, these unveiling power structures in satire (Smith, 2016; Reeves, 2019) far from being mere sources of amusement, serve as dynamic platforms for the articulation of collective evolution and impartiality. Notably, the marginalized communities, with a distinct focus on the queer community (Miller, 2019; Pinedo & Phillips, 2023) find an inclusive gateway within these comedic narratives (López et al., 2021). Moreover, through humor, individuals from historically marginalized groups gain access to these spaces and the agency to articulate and convey the intricacies of their struggles. (Leerssen & Barkhoff, 2021).

Lastly, the examination of transgender characters in Pakistani comedy shows sparked a myriad of inquiries (Chugh, 2022) exploring in what manner comedic portrayals, specifically in the form of jokes featuring TIs either reinforce established gender norms or disrupt them. This pivotal issue underscores the nuanced examination of how humor (Davis, 2022), when wielded within these narratives, becomes a vehicle for either perpetuating societal expectations regarding gender or acting as a catalyst for transformative change.

Research Objectives:

To identify the discursive strategies employed in comedic portrayals that reinforce established gender norms within Pakistani comedy shows.

To explore instances within comedic portrayals where discursive subversion occurs, challenging and disrupting established gender norms in the context of Pakistani comedy shows.

Research Questions:

The relationship between jokes, gender dynamics, and social change has been further explored by investigating the following research questions:

How do comedic portrayals in Pakistani comedy shows featuring transgender characters contribute to the discursive construction and reinforcement of established gender norms?

In what ways do comedic portrayals in Pakistani comedy shows featuring transgender characters challenge and subvert discourses surrounding established gender norms?

2. Literature Review

Comedy serves as a potent tool for societal reflection and transformative influence (Pierce, et al., 2014), the **evolution of transgender portrayals** of the "Pakistani Trans* community in TV serials" (Abbas, 2019; Zaman, et al., 2023) "**linguistic constructs and sociocultural representations**" for both oppression and resistance (Khubchandani, 2019; 2023), "**transformative potential of inclusive narratives**" (Serano, 2016; Callier, 2021; Mokhtar, 2019; 2021).

The depiction of transgender individuals in comedic productions remains a focal point of research and discourse, particularly in nations like Pakistan, where there is a growing emphasis on the rights and representation of the transgender community. When affirmational forms aim to stay true to established norms, transformational forms seek to break away from conventions, encouraging a fresh exploration of characters and narratives. The distinction is often crucial in analyzing creative works and understanding the creators' intent regarding continuity and innovation (Kunz & Wilde 2023).

Delineated by seminal scholars such as Bergson in his essay "Laughter" posited that laughter arises from

the perception of something mechanical and rigid in situations where flexibility and spontaneity are expected "inflexible" in generating comic effects (Vanderheiden & Mayer, 2021). Freud's "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious" (Serano, 2016); Lerner, 2023), Frye in "Anatomy of Criticism" (2020), and Bakhtin's (2019) ideas about the carnivalesque and dialogism for understanding the subversive and transformative potential in comedic forms function as powerful instruments for societal introspection and catalyzing transformative change.

The examination of transgender individuals within the comedic sphere is a pivotal focus in contemporary research and discussions particularly the scholarly works of Mary Douglas on "Natural Symbols," in 1970 emphasizing the role of humor in reinforcing cultural boundaries. On humor and joking relationships (Pierides & Sewell, 2019; Bachmann-Medick et al., 2020), John Morrell's comprehensive philosophy of humor in "Comic Relief" (2011), "Taking Laughter Seriously in 1983" and "The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor in 1987" (English, 2019) then Simon Critchley's "On Humor" in 2011 (Kuczok et al., 2019 & Emanuel, 2020) have paramount importance on how humor can provide a unique perspective on existence. These scholars collectively contribute to the scholarly dialogue surrounding the rights and nuanced representation of the transgender community, reflecting the evolving landscape of societal attitudes and perceptions especially in a Muslim society.

The imaginative and interconnected nature of storytelling culture (Thon, 2016) across multiple platforms is growing the overall representation and perception of transgender characters in Pakistani comedy shows. As in a transmedia narrative, creators often weave a story across different media channels (Kunz & Wilde, 2023) such as TV shows, movies, books, websites, social media, and more through narrative expansion, 'diverse storytelling elements', 'audience engagement', and 'cohesive story-world'. It still has room for an "oneiric climate"; a dreamlike or imaginative atmosphere, characterized by fantasy elements, and surrealism that transcends the boundaries of individual media platforms in existing audience feedback (Zhao, 2023).

Fandom within the context (Grant & Love, 2019) of 'Queer Issue'; the spectrum of non-heteronormative identities, expressions, and practices (Alexandrowicz, 2020) as a program's 'participatory' and 'critical community' (Deery, 2004; Falero, 2016) provides a compelling lens to understand the dynamics of power, discourse, and societal norms. In examining the video and associated comments, it becomes evident that there exists a perception of an open-minded, progressive, and supportive community (Stein & Busse, 2014; Stein, 2015). As Karki (2023) argues "media influences societal perceptions", transgender representation in Pakistani media has long been associated with stereotypes and marginalization. However, there has been a gradual shift towards more inclusive and nuanced portrayals in recent times as media portrayals of transgender people in Pakistan brought to light the emergence of a positive trend contributing to greater visibility and understanding of their issues (Asghar, 2018; Luurs, 2022).

Studies like Bernabéu (2023) on "Comic Deconstruction", "**Fearless Vulgarity and Camp Authorship**" Feil (2022), "Mediatization of Khwaja Siras and Mimetic Desires" Pamment (2022), "Intersectionality and Sexuality" Serano (2016), "Inclusive Narratives and Voices" Aizumi & Aizumi (2021), "Controversies and Inclusion in Comedy" Jack Black (2022), "LGBT Advocacy" Nogueira, et al. (2022), "Transcending Tokenism" Capuzza & Spencer (2017), "Positive Transgender Depiction" Zaman, et al. (2023), and "Contemporary Transgender Discourse" Schiappa (2022) have provided a critical contribution to the broader discourse on the current study.

Moreover, digging into the TV series is like a deep dive into how trans stories play out like a tour across cultures, expanding how we see trans characters, no matter where they pop up (González, 2022), understanding how all these identities mix up in the TV world (Griffin, 2023). Inseparably, it's a look at shows that shook up the culture like an unexpected combo of humor and history (Robinson, 2019; Slucki, et al. 2020). So, the messy world of edgy jokes on TV grapples with ethical questions, especially when it comes to transgender stories. By mixing these international, queer, historical, and controversial dimensions this study has tried to be part of a bigger conversation echoing beyond boundaries' transgender representation in Pakistani comedy; a stitch in the global fabric that how media, humor, and society all weave together.

3. Theoretical Framework

Critical Theory:

Established in 1923 at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Critical Theory, spearheaded by influential figures such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, has evolved into a multifaceted framework. Rooted in humanities and social philosophy, Critical Theory critiques societal power structures (Horkheimer 1972; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996). Key tenets include an emphasis on social critique, a focus on emancipation, and a commitment to revealing latent power dynamics. The enduring impact of Critical Theory, explored by Piccone 1978; Wiggershaus, 1994; Jay, 1996), Held, 1980; Geuss, 1981; Boltanski, 2011; Mussell, 2017, and Bronner, 2017) resonates in contemporary scholarship, providing an essential lens for

understanding and challenging prevailing norms.

Critical theory enables a comprehensive analysis of how diverse dimensions of identity intersect within comedic portrayals, aligning with the imperative set to acknowledge the intricate nature of social categories (Crenshaw, 2020; Collins, 2019). According to Horkheimer's elucidation of CT, it is ample only if it meets three criteria: explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time (Critical Theory (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), 2005). The imperative is to articulate shortcomings within the current social landscape (Boltanski & Fraser, 2021), identify those empowered to instigate "otherness" (Gaupp & Pelillo-Hestermeyer, 2021), and present precise criteria for critique (Henricks, 2023), coupled with practical and attainable goals for transforming society (Best, et al., 2018; Leavy, 2020).

This theory has been applied to uncover and analyze latency in power structures, ideologies, and social critiques, assessing their impact on the visibility and understanding of transgender experiences (Green, 2020) within the context of potential reinforcement or challenge (Ibsen, 2022). Moreover, the critical lens investigated the challenges and transformed power structures in the pursuit of social justice and equality in gendering (McNay, 2022) to shape "Trans Learning" (Strassfeld, 2023) in Pakistani sitcom shows reducing their pain (Richardson, 2023).

4. Methodology:

Social legitimacy refers to **perceived justifiability, normative alignment, consent and approval, authority recognition, and social contract** within a society (Huntington, 2006; Weber, 1978; Beetham, 2001; Cheek, 2004; Denzin, 2008 & Tyler, et al., 2019). It is perceived that legitimacy plays a crucial role in maintaining social order, stability, and cooperation, as it is often associated with the perceived fairness and appropriateness of authority and actions (Tyler, 2006; 2010; Suddaby, et al., 2017). So this perception provides a solid base to discuss the social context of discourse (Zappavigna, 2012; Herring, 2013).

Discourse, in a broad sense, covers a range of perspectives on discourse, including its archaeological analysis, the framing of experience, communicative action, the study of power relations, and its role in identity and gender shaping social realities (Goffman, 1974; Said, 1978; Butler, 1990; Stenson & Watt, 1999; Talja, 1999; Yakhlef, 2002). It encompasses spoken and written language, as well as non-verbal communication, and is often associated with the expression of knowledge, power dynamics, and social construction (Grant, et al., 1998; Chilton, 2004; Blommaert, et al., 2005; Mulderrig, 2012; Fairclough, 2013). Disentangling "discourse" substantially provides "linguistic orientation" (Mills, 2004), "post-structural representation" (Thompson, 1988), "social theory" (Lupton, 1992), and "social interaction" (Dijk, 1997) dimensions.

Foucauldian discourse analysis is a method that focuses on examining power structures and how they operate through language and discourse (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1979; 1981; Young, 1981, Berlin, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As "an epistemological consciousness of man" (Michel Foucault (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Summer 2021 Edition), 2018) to uncover valuable insights into the 'discursive construction of identities', 'power dynamics', 'knowledge dissemination', 'potential social changes', and the 'role of language in shaping representations' around social surroundings of transgender individuals and sitcom TV industry of Pakistan FDA has been conducted. Moreover, the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) approach has been outlined by various scholars like (Parker, 1990; Willig, 2017; Van Der List, 2016; Nair, 2016; Gray Brunton, et al., 2018; Montessori, et al., 2019; Carley, 2020 and Walker, 2022) to develop specific methodologies.

Sampling Procedure:

In this study, a two-fold sampling approach was employed, combining snowball sampling (Parker, et al., 2019) and cross-platform/transmedia (Spano, 2020; Feiereisen, et al., 2021) sampling, to get the sample of five TV episodes from HasbeHaal, Hoshyarian, Zabardast, Khabarhar, and Mastiyan YouTube channels. The seed episode, HASBEHAAL aired on Duniya News, was strategically chosen as the initial point of the analysis. This episode is recognized as a trendsetter in addressing transgender issues for identifying additional episodes in ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and representations of comedic discourse (Tsakona, 2020).

Moreover, recognizing the evolving nature of media consumption, this study has adopted a transmedia approach to sampling. YouTube, as a prominent online audio/video media industry (Arthurs, et al., 2018) played a central role in transmedia sampling methodology.

Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) Six Stages

- Discursive Practices: Identification of Specific Jokes, Comedic Narratives, and Dialogues
- Power Relations: Exploration of Power Dynamics

- Knowledge Production: Examination of How Comedic Representations Contribute to Knowledge Construction
- Social Change: Assessment of Comedy as a Catalyst for Social Change
- Language and Terminology: Study of Language Choices

Table 1 Hasb-e-Haal Official (2022)

Episode Number	Program Episode Name	Host & Co-Host	Characters	Channel	Theme of the Program
1	Sadda Haq Aithe Rakh Hasb-e-Haal Official (2022)	Junaid Saleem, Najia Baig	Sohail Amad, Amanat Chan, Nawaz Anjum	Dunya News	To advocate and demand job opportunities for the transgender community. To give awareness to the marginalized community and appreciation of what has only been done for their basic rights.

Voices Unveiled: Aspirations Beyond Stereotypes

In this episode five characters adopting the appearance and roles typically associated with the transgender community, participate in the program to share their aspirations and concerns on a broader platform. During the show, they engage with the host, expressing their desires and ambitions. The episode concludes with a song performance where the lyrics reflect their shared aspiration for empowerment and equal opportunities in society.

In the opening frame, the TGCs (Transgender Characters) chant a demanding slogan:

- KHWAJA SARAON KO NOKRIYAN DO
- (Give jobs to transgender individuals)

Symbolizes power and hope for the disempowered community. Answering the host’s questions about what they want to do, they say that they want to do their desired jobs as one of them expressed the desire to work as an air hostess. That guy gets trolled by the host, who is body shaming and makes fun of his weight and physical appearance. One of them expressed the wish to do a bank job but in his reply, the host said;

- AP CLIENT SE PUCHEN GE AP KITNI VEELLEN JAMA KRWANE AY HEI.
- (You’ll ask the clients, how much compensation/performance money they are agreed upon.)

“Veelen” is a particular word used for the money that is given by the event’s hosts to those who dance and perform their function. It’s mostly attached to the transgender community because they used to dance at events and get payment for their performance “compensation”. Such taunts from the host while replying to the guy reinforced such norms related to this community. It’s a reflection of the general treatment of the society with this community whenever anyone among them speaks and tries to raise his voice to do something the other genders don’t consider them capable enough for. Power relations on this matter in the society belong to the state, which was challenged, and the subjugated community opposed this and raised voices against it (Luther, (2023)). One among them mentioned his willingness to become a politician. Replying to the question of what he would do if he got in power, they start singing a song:

- ENJ JASHAN MANAWAN GEY...
- NACH LYA JINA NACHNA HON LOKAN NU NACHWAN GY
- LO G MZY HU AWAN GY JERY...
- SANU JERE TAKY MARDY HUN TARLY PAWAN GY
- (We will celebrate; we've danced as much as we wanted; now it's our turn to make others dance)
- (We will enjoy; those who initially mistreated us will now acknowledge our worth)

The term "Dance" is metaphorically used to depict mundane and undervalued tasks (Agnew, 2019) associated with society. When individuals from a marginalized community express their desire to attain power, it signifies a transformative shift in the societal framework. The lyrics convey not only a rebellion against subjugation but also embody the resilience to assert dominance in the face of historical oppression. This courage to rise above those who have historically marginalized them constitutes a profound and nuanced

layer of meaning (Garza, 2020) within the song's message. The comedic discourse persisted as the characters shifted focus to dancing, momentarily diverting from the ongoing serious discussion. The situation subtly suggested a behavioral expectation for the transgender community, encouraging them to maintain a specific discourse. Amidst the humor, the importance of education was underscored by the host, emphasizing its role in achieving higher ranks and positions. Moreover, the host highlighted state-provided opportunities for transgender individuals, acknowledging their potential to excel in mainstream subjects as a positive narrative.

Table 2 Hoshyarian

Episode Number	Program Episode Name	Host & Co-Host	Characters	Channel	Theme of the Program
2	Khawaja Saraon Show Halchal Di YouTube Channel, (2021)	Haroon Rafique, Irza Khan	Guru (Agha Majid), Didaar (Saleem Abela), Goga Pasroori, Sardar Kamal Abubakar Khan	ARY News	To expose the challenges faced by the transgender community in a society lacking safety and security within their homes. To explore and advocate for the enhancement of basic rights for this community within the country.

House of Revelations: Unmasking the Intruder

In this episode, the narrative is grounded in an actual event that unfolded within a transgender household. The portrayed characters represent members of the family directly involved in the real-life incident. A male intruder surreptitiously entered their residence with the intent of pilfering funds acquired from a dance performance. The family structure of this particular minority group deviates from the typical Pakistani family norms. Within this unit Guru, portrayed by Agha Majid, holds a position of supreme authority, serving as the cohesive force for the household. Agha Majid's role as Guru signifies the power dynamics within the family. The characters' depictions and their attire are noteworthy, with transgender individuals wearing traditional women's clothing, a norm in Pakistani society. In contrast, the alleged thief is dressed as a man. When unveiling the intruder's face, Didaar (Saleem) responds with a humorous yet powerful action – a slap. This comedic act symbolized a challenge to the prevailing power structure favoring males; promoting a notion of equal power distribution and conveying a subtle message to the marginalized community to recognize their worth and assert their influence when necessary (Ryle, 2023). Aired on a new channel, the show looks into the political discourse, highlighting the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and its inclusion of nearly 30 transgender individuals. When asked about their affiliation with the party, the response from Didaar (Saleem) affirms their involvement. This integration of political themes within a comedic framework reflects the show's engagement with broader societal issues.

- BILAWAL NE HAMARI BOTH RESPECT KI.
- (Bilawal has honored us a lot.)

This statement encapsulates the advocacy for transgender rights, emphasizing the need for equal treatment and societal acceptance. Bilawal Bhutto, as the PPP chairman, holds significance in Pakistani politics, and Didaar's specific mention of his name serves to educate the public on the community's acceptance at a prominent level. The endorsement of transgender acceptance by a major political party, as portrayed in a comedy show has become a valuable source for disseminating knowledge to the public. In the concluding segment, the host pivots to changes in sports related to gender equality. Notably, the shift from "Man of the Match" to "Player of the Match" and the replacement of "Batsman" with "Batter" is highlighted. This analysis unveils segments within the show that actively support the transgender community, presenting substantial evidence of dismantling stereotypes associated with the model minority on television.

Table 3 Zabardast

Episode Number	Program Episode Name	Host & Co-Host	Characters	Channel	Theme of the Program
3	Black Mail - Khawaja Zabardast With Wasi Shah, YouTube Video, (2021)	Wasi Shah, Maham Rehman	Honey Albela, Sakhawat Naz, Tahir Anjum	NEO News	To unveil the potential consequences of concealed recording videos and other data, shedding light on the associated outcomes. To disseminate information concerning the growing acceptance of transgender individuals in the realm of sports.

Power Play: Unraveling Transgender Triumphs

Embarking on the challenging quest to settle their overdue bills, three transgender families navigate the complexities of financial struggles. A stern bill collector issues a warning, threatening to withhold electricity reconnection until the debts are settled. In a surprising turn of events, the transgender individuals formulate a clever plan to ensnare the bill collector, employing seduction as their weapon of choice. Successfully executing their strategy, they capture the incriminating encounter on video and subsequently leverage it for a daring act of blackmail. The show host initiated the program with a tantalizing snippet about a noteworthy incident during the Olympics. The narrative unfolds within the household of a transgender family grappling with electricity bill troubles, and reaching out for assistance. Subsequently, a young man assuming the role of the electricity bill collector demands payment for two months' overdue bills. Faced with financial constraints, the family engages in negotiations to lower the amount owed.

They resort to charming and flattering him, leading to a proposition where he requests them to dance for his amusement in exchange for resolving the payment issue. The family plans to record the dance and subsequently attempts to blackmail the bill collector; if he doesn't settle their bill, they threaten to upload the video on social media. The bill collector promptly agrees to their terms, pleading with them not to share the video online. In the dialogues, a specific term, "TAMASH BENI," is employed to refer to a spectator, onlooker, or sightseer, where the bill collector is labeled a "Tamash ben," while the TIs are portrayed as the ones entertaining the spectator.

The host imparted a moral lesson from the incident, highlights the prevalent and regrettable trend of leaking personal videos or chats in contemporary times. Such activities are deemed distasteful and should be discouraged. The comedic portrayal of the transgender characters is linked to such discouraging behavior contributes to a negative image of the transgender community. The episode's title, "Blackmail Khawaja Sira," reinforces this critical analysis, suggesting that a positive message is conveyed through an inappropriate medium, where comedic discourse falls short in promoting a favorable perception of them (Watt, 2023).

However, in the episode's closing segment, the host shared news about transgender athlete Laurel Hubbard, who made history by participating in the Olympics as the first transgender athlete. Hubbard also competed in the world weightlifting championship, securing a silver medal. Injecting humor, Tahir Anjum added:

- ISNE GOLD MEDAL BE JEET JANA THA LEKIN, ISNE WEIGHT LIFT KIYA TOU KISI NE GANA LAGA DIYA.
- (He could have won a gold medal, but as soon as he lifted weights, someone started playing music.)

Now this comedic stair has a context, as it criticizes the mindset of this particular society where the public considers that TIs are only capable of dancing to music and entertaining the masses.

Table 4 Khabarhar

Episode Number	Program Episode Name	Host & Co-Host	Characters	Channel	Theme of the Program
4	Khawaja Sara Kay Ghar se - Jaag utah hai sara watan sathiyun mujahidon Khabarhar YouTube Video (2022)	Aftab Iqbal, Dr. Arooba	Nasir Chinoti, Sakhawat Naaz, Asad Kaifi, Waseem Puno, Muhammad Babar Siddique, Mirza Azhar Rangeela	SAMAA TV	To emphasize the educational significance and business opportunities for TIs. To illuminate strategies for overcoming barriers hindering their progress.

Theatrical Symphony of Challenges

The episode revolves around a household comprising five (performers portraying) transgender individuals cohabiting with a musician. Host Aftab Iqbal introduces the audience to the transgender house where they enter with dance performances emphasizing the cultural context of living in a household of Hijras. Aftab discourages their dancing, urging them to pursue education and consider various professions like catering, cooking, fashion designing, and singing. The co-host, a doctor, cites an example of a transgender doctor who turned to dance due to family disapproval and financial constraints.

- Responding to these business proposals Puno replied;
- *HAMY KAAM TO KARNE ATY HEIN LEKIN ISKO START KRNE K LIYE PESA KAHAN SE LAIN?*
- (We come to work, but where do we get the money to start?)

In backing those TIs aspiring to work and earn but hindered by financial constraints, the host referenced Dr. Amjad Saqib, whose Akhuwat foundation extends interest-free loans to marginalized communities. Disseminating such valuable information through infotainment programs underscores their potential to uplift the underprivileged in society. Moreover, during the discussion of business ideas, the host noted the presence of six TIs, prompting an objection from the male musician who promptly corrected that.

- *YE KYA SOKHI HAE? AAP KAHO K AAP LOG PANCH TRANSGENDER HEIN,*
- (*What is this mischief? You say that you people are five transgender.*)

The musician's expressions and the laughter from the audience vividly illustrate the sensitivity surrounding the term "Hijra" when directed at a male, highlighting the extent to which society disowns and rejects their association with this identity (Hossain, et al., 2023). Humorously presenting serious issues not only characterized the essence of a comedy show but also contextualized the experiences of transgender individuals in society (Herriot & Fry, 2021) reflected in their authentic responses. The show's host, when referencing the transgender community, imparted a noteworthy piece of advice,

- *AP BOHAT TALENTED LOG HEIN, BOTH PYAARE LOG HEIN, THODI SI APNI FINE-TUNING KREN, APNE AAP KO MODIFY KREN*
- (*You guys are very talented, lovely people, just fine-tune yourselves a bit; modify yourselves a bit.*)

The dialogue, "You guys are very talented, so beautiful, but you must modify yourselves a little bit," is contextualized by the apparent expectation in society that TIs conform to a specific behavior and appearance. The underlying message is an awareness that adaptation to societal norms is necessary for integration into the workforce. In the closing segment, a former police officer turned singer appeared on stage, presenting gifts to his music teacher and the TIs. A humorous element is introduced as Tis engage in a playful fight over their preferred cloth colors. While this comedic discourse may perpetuate the stereotype that this community cannot be serious and engage in trivial conflicts, the reality contradicts this perception. The transgender community, often rejected by their families, exemplifies unity, acceptance, and a shared living experience, challenging societal misconceptions.

Table 5 Mastiyan

Episode Number	Program Episode Name	Host & Co-Host	Characters	Channel	Theme of the Program
5	Transgender Vs Police In Mastiyan, SHO Zafri Khan In Action Mastiyan YouTube Video (2023)	Veena Malik,	Zafri Khan, Sardar Kamal, Mirza Azhar Rangeela, Shajar Abbass, Hamid Rangeela, Ayub Mirza,	SUNO NEWS HD	To advocate for the education's benefits and societal opportunities of marginalized community. To explore the diplomatic strategies TIs employ to garner support from powerful state representatives for a more manageable daily life.

Harmony amidst Discord

In the opening scene, the transgender individuals (adeptly performing actors) living together face internal conflict, leading to division and a demand for separation. The intervention of their Guru, a character with significant influence in the transgender household, swiftly resolves the issue, emphasizing the pivotal role the Guru plays in decision-making. Acknowledging the Guru's power, the host suggests sending them for education, to which the Guru responds that some among them have pursued education and become lawyers. Additionally, the Guru highlights the existence of a transgender judge in a neighboring country, showcasing social determinants of educational and professional achievements within the transgender community (Banik, et al., 2023) by saying,

- *JO TW HEIN HAMARY JESE WO MEHNAT KI KAMAI KRK KHAEN GE, YR KAMBAKHT PTA NAI KON HEIN JO APNA HULIA BADAL KR SIGNALS PY MANGTY HEIN*
- *(Those who are like us will earn through hard work. Don't know about those who change their identity and beg at signals.)*

Significant information is conveyed through the dialogues in the show, where the transgender individuals explicitly reject the association with those who beg at traffic signals, emphasizing that they identify as male and not part of that particular group. This transfer of crucial information presented humorously, increases the likelihood of audience retention and has the potential to reshape perceptions about the transgender community. A police officer from the nearby police station regularly visits the transgender household. He shares an anecdote about a recent raid where he was on the verge of being apprehended by criminals. Recounting the incident, he mentions,

- *MENE ANKHEN BAND KIN, AMMA TUMHARI DUON KI CERHIYAAN MERE SAMNY*
- *GURU: JEETE RAHO BETA TUMHY KABHI GARM HUA NA LAGY*
- *(When I closed my eyes, I saw stairs courtesy of your blessing.)*
- *(Guru: May you live long, son; I always pray you never have had any hard times.)*

The context is intriguing, as some individuals in society perceive TIs as special and believe that they are closer to God, leading to the immediate acceptance of their prayers. The police officer in the episode aligns with this perspective. He expresses a deep connection with the transgender community, likening it to familial bonds, a sentiment reciprocated by Guru, who responds,

- *SHUKAR HAE KISI NE TW HAMY FAMILY KAHA*
- *(Thankfully, at least somebody calls us a family.)*

In the dialogue where Guru responds to the police officer expressing closeness "the single word, "family," challenges societal norms and stereotypes by acknowledging the transgender individuals as part of a familial unit, a designation often denied to them by broader society. Undoubtedly, such a single word in the dialogue itself is so powerful that it challenges societal norms and stereotypes of society, which is not ready to accept them as members of their family.

Upon hearing the news of the police officer's potential transfer, emotions run high among the group,

prompting Guru to say:

- *KAL TAK TW MERI BACHIYAN BHIR NIKALTI THIN TW HAR KOI TUMHARI SISTERS SAMJ KR APNI AANKHEN JHUKA LETTA THA*
- *(Until yesterday, my girls used to roam freely, and everyone considered them as your sisters, bowing their heads in respect.)*

The police officer then requests Guru;

- *AMMA AGR AP DUA KREN GI TW MERA TRANSFER RUK JAE GA*
- *(Mother, if you pray, my transfer will be stopped.)*

The officer departs from the house, strolling in a manner reminiscent of how transgender individuals typically walk. Guru inquires:

- *AGLA INSPECTOR KON AA RAHA HAE?*
- *TIs: KHURSHEED JAAN*
- *GURU: NI UTHO, JIS K NAAM K SATH JAAN LAGTA HAZROOR HAM ME SE HI HO GA*
- *(Who is the next coming inspector? TIs: Kursheed Jaan. Guru: No move up. If the next inspector's name includes 'Jaan,' he's likely to be one of us.)*

In the final moments of this segment, as depicted in Figure 5, a significant shift occurs in the perception of these TIs. They strategically play the praying card with individuals in power, seeking to secure the freedom enjoyed by others in society. Learning about the imminent transfer of the current officer, Guru instructs his family members to prepare themselves to influence the upcoming officer. This aspect aligns with the show's title, "Transgender vs. Police," portraying TIs as the victors. The screenplay conveys a potent, albeit alarming, hidden message that underscores the equality of other genders and their capacity to navigate societal dynamics, even challenging representatives of state institutions (Khan, 2019).

Results and Discussions

The Foucauldian discourse analysis undertaken in this study critically scrutinized the interplay of power, knowledge, and language (Goffman, 2023) within the context of pathologizing of gender-expensive individuals (Johnson, 2018) in Pakistani TV comedy shows. The diverse styles, routines, and techniques employed in the show extend beyond mere humor; they serve as a vehicle for challenging societal norms and power structures that contribute to shaping perceptions about marginalized communities. The jokes originating from different ethnicities concerning TIs offered a fresh perspective, illustrating how language and humor can be wielded to either favor or undermine specific social groups. Moreover, the analysis has inquired into the dismantling of stereotypical perceptions about Trans*, such as their perceived inability to engage meaningfully in interactions and their presumed abnormal behavior in public spaces. The metaphoric dialogues used in the comedy shows served as a powerful tool to present a delicate balance between jokes that challenge prevailing norms and prejudices against the gender-diverse community (Pincus & Ellis, 2021). Furthermore, this study endeavored to achieve the role of humane and cultural humor, shedding light on how it becomes internalized within societal discourses through the nuanced nature of humor and gender diversity (Wong, 2019).

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