"The Muses Themselves Would Bear Witness to this Injustice": Representation and Identification of the Transgender Women on Pakistani Social Media

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Abstract

Based on a discourse analysis of gender and sexuality related discussions found on Pakistan's social networking websites, this article attempts to establish that Pakistani urbanites in fact draw on certain web-forums as springboards for reflexive discussion on gender and sexual identities. The aims of this article are, first, to analyze the role that socio-economic and discursive conditions play in the construction of gender and sexual identity of the transgender women and 'alleged' homosexuals. Second, this article investigates Pakistan's mainstream discourse's affordances of sexist and hetero-patriarchal expressions by tracing how historical experience and texts move across discursive space. Furthermore, this article suggests that the emotions of 'pity' and 'fear' attached with the transgender experience and lack of awareness regarding alternative gender and sexual subjectivities play a fundamental role in the way gender and sexual identities are interpreted in Pakistan. More specifically, intertextuality, interdiscursivity and recontextualization seem to serve as a way to bring (non)heteronormative discourses into Pakistan's epistemic order without necessarily articulating alternative discourses ostensibly.

Keywords: *Transgender women, identity, representation, discourse, Pakistan*

1. Preliminary Considerations

Over the past few years, significant developments have been made in different parts of the world in relation to the discourse of gender and sexuality (McInnes & Davies 2008). The discourse of gender and sexuality seems to have evolved through research, discussions and debates (O'Toole 2014; Daily Mail Reporter 2014; Whisnant 2012). The individuals especially men who do not come up to the standards of hegemonic heteropatriarchy are ridiculed and laughed at in many conservative societies. Pakistan is one such society where advocacy of transgender rights and resistance against hegemony of mainstream heteropatriarchy is in infancy. The experiences of transgender persons and their plea for acceptance struggle to find representation in heteronormative system of signification of

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Pakistan. Reworking the ideas of commonsense and biological essentialism, the heteronormative discourse represents the disruptive possibilities of gender nonconformity and justifies ontological certainty of masculinities and femininities. The non-heteronormative discourse could be considered a response to interdiscursive and intertextual representations of postmodern emancipatory discourse of liberation (Janks & Ivanic, 1992: 305), gender deviation, (in)tolerance and (un)acceptance of the non-mainstream. The interdiscursive nature of non-heteronormative discourse is constructed across a range of domains such as sociological, legal, legislative, religious, political, and communal. There are many ways to describe and define (non)heteronormative discourse. The heteronormative discourse could be understood as a form of heteropatriarchal-themed language that is distinct from sexist discourse.

In this article, the term 'non-heteronormativity' does not denote the human tendency to indulge in same-sex romantic relationships. Here the term 'non-heteronormativity' has been amplified to include and represent the group of people who express tolerance for non-conformist gender and sexual identities and seem to plead for their acceptance in varying degrees. The non-heteronormative group in Pakistan is generally interpreted as transgender community whose voice finds seldom representation on the social media. The social media discussion is dominated by heteronormative discourse and social networking sites of Pakistan are replete with heteronormative discourse samples. If some elderly man is still single, the social media is quick to identify him as an individual with non-conformist gender and sexual identity. If discussion participants on the social media find body language and voice quality of a man a little effeminate, they are quick to identify him as a transgender person. The term *hijra* is attributed as an abuse to a man who is considered coward, whimsical or ineffective and so on. Having observed such trends on Pakistani social media, this article particularly focused on transgender women related social media discussions. The transgender women's rights discourse is almost non-existent on Pakistani social media, it was hard to find discussions exclusively devoted to this topic. Despite this, the discussions did mention cross-dressers and *hijras* (an all-inclusive term in South Asia for transgender/transsexual women, eunuchs, and transvestites). The discourse samples from such sources were focused on for in-depth study and analysis in this paper.

In closed collectivist societies like Pakistan, the insecurity and expected punitivity do not let transgender persons declare their non-conformist gender and sexual identities easily. Such inhibitions mark discursive set-up of a society where sexual and gender stereotypes are

conflated, and any digression from stereotypical ways is scrutinized. Such scrutiny creates a kind of cognitive dissonance in transgender people and leads to affect their sense of identity. Thus, the standards of wider society make transgender persons believe that they fall short of what they really ought to be. In other societies in which gender and sexuality do not appear to conflate, masculine men and feminine women express their identities without much difficulty (Johnson 2012). It would not be wrong to infer that attitudes towards and evaluation of transgender women's behavior vary cross-culturally. Many studies also confirm that gender non-conformist attitudes and behaviours are not adequately understood by the majority of a society. Pakistan also represents one such society where a transgender woman becomes a myopic view of sexual negativity. The myopic view of alternative sexualities is an outcome of the hegemonized equation of heterosexuality with natural human experience.

It is observed that the gender non-conformists are abused and vilified in conservative and traditional societies. This study is keen to illuminate the intricacies of hegemonized heteronormativity in the process of gender non-conformist subject formation, same-sex attracted subject identification and how the jeer or sympathy are, in practice, processes of identity (re)construction in a given identification paradigm (Rizwan 2019). According to Rizwan (2019), identification paradigm refers to a range of identity markers which are available to a person in a given intercontextual setting. Thus, this article attempts to explores how the kind of pity involved in identifying gender-non-conformists "special people" and "poor creatures" is an attempt to shut down the presence of ambiguities related to gender. In other words, such pitiful reaction to gender non-conformity serves to establish that men who "act like women" or cross-dress need to be sympathized and taken pity on so that the normative ideals of masculinity, wherein men act in accordance with masculine stereotypes and women act in accordance with feminine stereotypes, can be reiterated and made natural.

2. Theory and Method

The overarching analytical framework for this particular article is Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) which is known for its concerns for various forms of social inequalities and injustices. Unsurprisingly, gender and sexuality related inequalities and injustices could also become a part of CDA's broad range of concerns. The feminist linguists have been working for some time under the umbrella of CDA without articulating any need to display a feminist label explicitly. On the other hand, there are some feminists like Lazar (2007) who feel that there is a need of an overt feminist flag because the studies dealing with gender in CDA are not necessarily feminist. So, the term Feminist

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth FCDA) was introduced by Lazar (2007) in her article *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis.*

The feminist CDA is concerned with the way gender relations get (re)produced, negotiated, and contested in different representations across various social institutions, social practices and (re)construction of collective and personal identities. Furthermore, Lazar (2007) talks about gender relationality and declares it one of the core principles of FCDA. Lazar (2007) relates gender relationality to discursive constructions of the ways of doing gender and being a gendered being, and to the dynamics between different forms of masculinity in terms of how these forms participate within hierarchies of oppression that affect women. Following Lazar (2007) this article prefers the label of FCDA to analyze gender related texts.

The discourse samples for this particular study were collected from the comment sections of the electronic edition of *Dawn*, the leading English language newspaper of Pakistan. The comments on the electronic editions of *Dawn* were studied from May 1, 2013 to April 30, 2019 and a corpus was compiled using purposive sampling. The general aim of the data collection process was to identify, for microtextual discourse analysis, the different ways in which transphobic and transphilic (people with favourable feelings for transgender people) sentiments were invoked by the commenters. Given this context, the following framework was used as the comments were reviewed:

(1) *Identifying relevant texts* by examining a range of discussions on Dawn's electronic edition's and Facebook's comment sections with representation of transgender people in general and transgender women in particular
(2) *Text selection* according to explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria and;
(3) *Discursively analyzing the data for themes*.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were:
- Those written in English;
- Posts that were about transgender women and transphobic/transphilic discourses in Pakistan and;
- Those related to evolving representation of transwomen (from ridicule and degradation to acknowledgement of transgender community's rights and recognition)

Taking all these issues into consideration, six (06) discussions from the electronic edition of

Dawn between July 1, 2013 to May 30, 2019 were selected and analyzed for this study. The break-down of the selected comments is given in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Break-down of comments selected for inclusion in the investigation

	Threads	No. of comments	URL
1	Being Queer was not always a crime in Pakistan	50 (on Dawn's electronic edition+ 35 (on Dawn's Facebook comments)	https://www.dawn.com/news/1135082 https://www.facebook.com/dawndotcom/photos/being-queer-was-not-always-a-crime-in-pakistan-httpwwwdawncomnews1135082/10154632905220442/
2	Cross-dressing for a better life in Rawalpindi	41 (on Dawn's electronic edition) 222 (on Dawn's Facebook page)	https://www.dawn.com/news/1158693 https://www.facebook.com/dawndotcom/posts/cross-dressing-for-a-better-life-in-rawalpindiread-more-httpwwwdawncomnews115869/10155109211240442/
3	With transgender rights Pakistan has an opportunity to be a pathbreaker	08 (on Dawn's electronic edition)	https://www.dawn.com/news/1450616
4	Kami Sid has termed the accusations "false."	29 (on Dawn's Facebook page)	https://www.facebook.com/dawndotcom/posts/kami-sid-has-termed-the-accusations-falseread-more-httpsimagesdawncomnews1182836/10161929600080442/
5	Trans activist Kami Sid is being accused of rape and intimidation	09(on Dawn's electronic edition) 29(on Dawn's Facebook page)	https://images.dawn.com/news/1182836 https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=trans%20activist%20kami%20sid%20is%20being%20accused%20of%20rape%20and%20intimidation&epa=SEARCH_BOX
6	India appoints first transgender as college principal	54 (on Dawn's electronic edition) 475 (on Dawn's Facebook page)	http://www.dawn.com/news/1184529/ https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=Dawn.com%20transgender&epa=SEARCH_BOX
	Total	954	

The texts by the commenters discussing terrorism in Pakistan were coded manually and a list of key words and phrases depicting various types of responses was created including information such as:

- The sympathizers of transgender women
- The haters of transgender women
- For prompt army action against the harassment of transgender women
- Against any violence against transgender women

In this way, different discourses drawn upon were identified so there was a dual focus on 'what' was being presented (content: expressions about transgender women) and 'how' it was being presented (process: transphobic and transphilic groups exporting transgender community related narratives in general and transgender women related narratives in particular).

Section 4 and related sub-sectons present detailed analysis of transphpbic and transphilic discourse in relation to trangender women's identity (re)construction.

4. Analysis

4.1 Gender and Sexuality Related Debate: From Hijras (transwomen) to Heteronormativity

In social media debates on non-conformist gender and sexual identities, the first task the participants were required to undertake was to state clearly: a transperson is not the same as homosexual. While the use of the word *hijra* {gender "performativity" (Butler 1990) a transgender woman} in mainstream discourse implies a subversion of normative gender identities wherein gender binarism is the only "natural" sexual division, this noun (*hijra*) for alternative gender identities was always there to challenge the binary structures like male/female, natural/ unnatural, opposite-sex/same-sex attraction, and so on. In these binary relations a discursive hierarchy could easily be identified. In all these opposite relations, the first term (i.e. male, natural, same-sex attraction) occupies a more privileged status than the second and is processed earlier in the mental schemata than the other. In the mental schemata of a general Pakistani, the term *hijra* stands in opposite relation to both male and female. Thus, the binarism in the case of alternative identities would go this way:

a) natural gender identity vs. unnatural gender identity
b) male and female identity vs. transgendered identity
c) heteronormative identity vs. homosexual identity

Thus, the *hijra* or a transgender woman becomes the living and palpable representation of all the ideas on the right side of these equations. These equations have been challenged by many social media users in the following words (See C.1 and C.2 below):

C.1   hijra i.e. transgender & gay have been mixed up in the article completely....The Mughals were tolerant towards transgenders , not gays (Posted by the P1 in *Being queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread on September 29, 2014: dawn.com).

C.2   Gay = Choice. Transgender = Not a choice. Gay =! Transgender (Posted by P3 on Sep 29, 2014 in *Being queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread: dawn.com).

Rather than inverting or extending the term *hijra*, the text producers in these instances suggest that it is more productive to make the interconnected terms transparent which tend to render gendered mental schemata of Pakistani society blur. With this perspective in mind, let us return to the fuzzy gender and sexual identities in question. Various interpretations which social media comments texts offer apparently divide the social media users into three groups and each group take up a different ideological and identification position: heteronormative and transphobic, non-heteronormative and transphilic and the neutrals and the unconcerned ones.

Many social media commenters are conservative members of Pakistani society who identify anything feminine in men as a sign of their troubled identity and make fun of them. Therefore, it is not very uncommon to observe this kind of comments (see C.4 and C.5) on the social media:

C.3   ... She sounds like a horrible person that was riding the tidal wave of trans activism funded by the west. Also really disappointing to see the women's NGO and all other 'feminists' were protecting this rapist all along. Jan apnai Ghar ki baat aye tou moun band (meaning *you are speechless because your own clan is involved*). Tarnishes your credibility (Posted by Rf on May 25, 2019 in *Trans activist Kami Sid is being accused of rape and intimidation*: Dawn.com)

In C.3 transphobic linguistic expressions are quite obvious. Pakistanis seem to believe that

Pakistani language provides the best expressions for humiliation of others. So, they like to incorporate Urdu expressions (see underlined chunk in C.3) to address transphilic groups. Another way to resist alternative gender and sexual identities rests in "religio-historical evidence" which requires the recontextualization of religious and historical myths regarding trans community to declare transgender women as sinful and eternally damned creatures. The (re)contextualization and interdiscursivity are quite overt in the following comment:

C.4   The Mughal Rulers' kingdom was never in accordance with the spirit of Islam. It contradicted Islam and its teachings. Since by the grace of Allah the rules enacted in Pakistan in present and past time do reflect the spirit of Islam…Organs are only meant for reproduction after all and the 'hijras' must see logic in it. (Posted by P8 on October 3, 2014 in *Being queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread: dawn.com)

Let us consider the following comment now:

C.5   The people of Lot (Posted by P10 on April 10, 2015 in *Crossdressing for a better life in Rawalpindi* discussion thread on Facebook page of Dawn Newspaper)

This comment (C.5) was posted in a discussion about some cross-dressers in Pakistan who live in extreme poverty. This kind of recontextualization within comments' text provides required truth claim to the text producers' pronouncements. This one and similar discursive strategies serve to uphold heteronormativity as one and the only "acceptable" and "ethical" way of life.

4.2 Heteronormative Bullying and Harassment
Now let us have a look at the following couple of comments (C.6 and C.7) and visualize them being uttered by a bunch of brats in real life situations:

C.6   Then Mia Khalifa is a Aalima too (Posted by P10 on May 26,, 2019 in *Kami Sid was accused of rape and intimidation by several people on social media a few days ago* discussion thread on Facebook page of Dawn Newspaper)
C.7   She is he (Posted by P11 on May 26,, 2019 in *Kami Sid was accused of rape and intimidation by several people on social media a few days ago* discussion

thread on Facebook page of Dawn Newspaper)

The transgender women have to face this sort of verbal harassment and bullying in their journey of discovery of their identity and place in Pakistan every day. The transgender persons are subjected to vilification, abuse, and fear even if a minor hint of femininity is observed in their persona such as feminine voice or body language. In an instance, such a person loses the candidature of a rights activist because a heteronormative and transphobic discursive set-up does not consider a *hijra* or a transgender woman capable of doing anything worthwhile. This mindset gets perfect representation in C.8 when a transgender woman who happened to be a transgeder rights activist was accused of rape and intimidation:

C.8   People like this (i.e. transgender rights activist) go crazy over any rape/harassment allegation, now they themselves are having to put up with such allegations. (Posted by P14 in *Sheikh Rasheed telling for the first time why he calls Bilawal Bhutto* a gay discussion thread on November 20, 2014: zemtv.com)

Dissemination of selective transphobic discourse(s) and propagation of heteronormative historical accounts (as observed in the instances given above) are few of the preferred discursive strategies of a heteronormative mindset. By disseminating ancient historical accounts of idealized masculine heroes and warriors, heteropatriarchy makes an attempt to silence non-conformist gender experiences. There are many great men and women in the history with alternative gender and sexual identities, but their accounts never come on surface in a heteronormative culture.

4.3 Acceptance and Tolerance: Transgenderism a Reality not a Moral Aberration
In response to such widespread prejudices, some groups on Pakistani social media emerge to defend trans communities and makes an attempt to represent deviant sexual behaviour "as the product of human's biological make-up." In the following couple of comments, a female social media user makes an attempt to counter some of the prejudiced participants on a discussion forum (see, e.g. C.9):

C.9   @Ali Azlan They (eunuchs and gays) are not the same thing. Eunuchs were forced. These were boys who were castrated before they fully developed, so they could be employed to work in the woman's area. Due to the absence of the

male hormone testosterone they remained "feminine" and did not fully develop as males. Consequently they were targeted by other males and forced into relationships. Gays are born gay... (Posted by P15 on September 30, 2014 in *Being queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread: dawn.com)

Dececco and Baker (2013) and many other theorists (Bronski et al. 2013) debunk the 'myth' that deviant sexual and gender identity is a choice. Dececco and Baker (2013: 22) believe that this is an argument frequently used to deny societal acceptance to trans-community. Just as one does not choose to be a man and a woman, one seldom chooses to be a trans-individual.

As we know, the digitally mediated communication employs a distinct mode of language where the boundaries between spoken and written language blur (Page et al. 2014). The same could be observed in the above-given and subsequent comments. The discussion participants try to rationalize their arguments, provide. (re)contextualized statistics and historical accounts with the help of intertextual and interdiscursive instances. Unlike in written documents no references are provided and no substantial proof is given to validate the given facts. Interestingly, no such details are asked for by interlocutors either. In C.10 the discussion participant provides interesting historical and mythical details about the existence of different forms of transgenderism. In this way s(he) establishes the justification of acceptability of non-conformist gender and sexual identities:

C.10   So true. Chinese emperors personal guards were all transgenders. Mughals had them in their chambers as they were the only ones who were allowed to go to the women chamber. One of the brother in Mahabharata was a eunuch. So they accepted that every human had a place in the society. When Christianity spread they killed these people for no fault of theirs. Even now in India there are temples dedicated to Araivanan (half man half woman) deities… The entire situation must be looked at in a different view. Live and let live must be the motto of the universe. (Posted by P19 on September 30, 2014 in *Being queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread: dawn.com)

It is not surprising that all the intertextual and interdiscursive instances of transgender behavior cited by the social media users involve male monarchs (from deities to emperors to philosophers to poets). As women and their experiences have been traditionally ignored in the writings of history (Aslakson 2008), their quest for alternative gender and sexual identity

remains unarticulated. The ancient traditions like those of Chinese, Mughals and other monarchs—as mentioned by the commenters above—were constructed within cultures in which male hypermasculinity was crucial to the practice of homosociality. This practice of homosociality intended to present male mythical and literary "protagonists as hypermasculine" (McInnes & Davies 2008: 110). The mainstream heteropatriarchal discourses of masculinity and sexuality have serious psychological effects and induce the emotions of self-loathing in transgender persons (Clarke et al. 2010: 104).

4.4 The spectacle of transgender woman or hijra: The Ridiculous and the Pitiful
A section of Pakistani social media users (20%) identify every transwoman as a *hijra*. If they happen to see some cross-dressed men in lipstick and colorful dress, they are quick to label them as a *hijra*. It further suggests that the social media users' ideas of the 'masculine' are hinged on essentialist notions of manhood. The narratives of masculine pride are built on ideas about masculine appearance and clothing. The conventional gendered discursive practices foreclose, by ridiculing men's public performance in women's clothing, any possibility of pride about non-heteronormativity. Eventually, the ridicule at best takes the form of pity.

The abundance of linguistic representation of pity for the transwomen suggests that the demonstration of pity is a (re)assurance against certain affects, notably outrage and horror of non-conformist gender and sexual identities. In *Rhetoric* Aristotle defines pity as a kind of "pain exercised by sight of evil, deadly or painful which befalls one who does not deserve it" (Aristotle 1926: 1385 b). The pity-produced avoidance of pain contains a fear of reflexivity: that the assumed horror might be experienced by those feeling pity and those who witness the sight of pity and horror. The chain of comments given below (from C.14 to C.16) provides a glimpse of some of the 'pitiful' linguistic expressions for cross-dressers:

C.11   feeling so sad for them all they r doing to get food heart crying (Posted by P22 in *Cross-dressing for a better life in Rawalpindi* Facebook discussion thread on January 22, 2015: dawn.com)

C.12   OMG :-(Posted by UI51 in *Cross-dressing for a better life in Rawalpindi* Facebook discussion thread on January 22, 2015: dawn.com)

C.13   very terrible (Posted by P23 in *Cross-dressing for a better life in Rawalpindi* Facebook discussion thread on January 22, 2015: dawn.com)

According to these text producers (from C.11 to C.13) the sight of transgender women is a 'sad' and 'terrible' sight, terrible enough to make one's heart cry. These 'horror-filled' expressions for non-conformist gender and sexual identities are actually Pakistani society's socio-cognitive representations of gender and sexuality related identification paradigm. This paradigm is incapable of recognizing varying shades of personal and collective identities owing to epistemic and discursive constraints of its particular time and space. All the commenters, even the tolerant and the transphilic ones, state that 'you' (the transgender women) have the right to live a 'normal' life like 'us' but, unfortunately, 'we' do not see life getting better for 'you' in near future (see C.14 and C.15):

C.14   I think it is the duty of the State to protect ALL its citizens regardless of race, gender, creed, colour, sexuality. It is appalling how we treat the most marginalized members of our society. Minorities need our protection. We will be judged by history based on how we treat our most vulnerable people. Let that be a lesson. (Posted by P31 in *Boxing Gender: LGBTQ Struggle in Pakistan* discussion thread on November 25, 2014: dawn.com)

C.15   …You people have to wait till life's become viable on 'the Mars'. Best of luck. (Posted by P33 in *Being Queer was not always a crime in Pakistan* discussion thread on September 29, 2015: dawn.com)

The hypothetical transgender addressees 'you' in the above-mentioned comments are recognized through the moments of gender enactments or in Butler's (1997) conception, through gender 'performatives'. Performatives or gender enactments happen within the semiotic and discursive constraints of a particular context. In Pakistani heteropatriarchal social media discourse, the male and female discussion participants declare transgender women the disordered ones— "a man acts like a man and whoever does not acts like a man is a 'eunuch'". The social media users' declarations about all the deviant performative acts of transgender women as eunuch's acts serve to (re)construct manliness's "essential" opposition to the femaleness. It is this connection between performatives and resultant identification paradigm(s) which makes gender binarism look "natural": the binarism that identifies masculinity in men and femininity in transwomen (e.g. transsexual/transgender women and eunuchs).

5. Summary of the Findings
Table 1 summarizes the major qunatified findings of this particular article. As mentioned

above, the data for this particular article comprises 954 comments. Heteronormative comments dominate the data (60%). Non-heteronormativity and neutral/ambiguous expressions for the queers were observed in 15% and 25% comments respectively. The representation of feminized version of transgender persons was observed in 20% comments and the expressions of pity and fear for the transgender women were observed in 72% comments.

Trends	Statistics
Number of comments studied	954
Heteronormative comments	60%
(Non)heteronormative comments	15%
Neutral/Ambiguous	25%
Comments with the representation of feminized version of transgender people	02%
Comments with the expression of pity and fear for transgender women	72%

6. Concluding Remarks

In drawing this discussion to a close, it should be considered what theoretical maneuvers made in this article offer in terms of Pakistani sociocultural approach to gender and sexuality. This analysis attempts to answer how a strict heteropatriarchal society engages in an effective way to keep the gender non-conformists silent. Huegel (2011: 202) suggests a range of gender expressions (i.e. the term 'gender expressions' stands for signals or cues people use to express their gender identities) which provide people with supposed cues to decide someone's anatomical sex. Key to the development of an idea of gender expression is the idea of the body and appearance. According to Huegel (2011) gender expression includes your clothes, hairstyle, body language (how you walk, your posture your gesture, your mannerisms), and even speech patterns. The transgender women are thus identified, through certain gender expressions because they do not do prescribed gender and become a sight of gender melancholias (Butler 1990). Heteropatriarchy's response discourse at the sight of deviant gender expression forms socio-cognitive representations of what is considered precarious gender behavior

Pakistani social media discourse of apparent transphobia does not suggest any empathy with the individuals with alternative gender and sexual identity because empathy rests on knowing

the other. In fact, social media users' avoidance to provide any clue to their (non)conformist gender and sexual identities is akin to resistance to sure knowledge of the 'other'. When a transgender woman is identified, the transphilic group considers it vital to jump into the discussion in her defense and preach against labelling her as a sinner or as someone acting against the nature. The transphobic group, on the other hand, is quick to notice trans community's precariousness as they could bring about a disorder in gender status quo. The internalized fear of the deviants compels the 'normal' men and women to sympathize with the people with transgender expression. The very masculinity or femininity of 'straight' and 'normal' heterosexual Pakistani social media users and their investment in the ordering of gender depend on the split between 'natural' and 'unnatural' gender performativity. It is impossible for any discourse community with prescribed identification clues for accepted embodiments of masculinities or femininities to maintain its order and balance without the discourse of disordered and unbalanced gender identities. At this moment, the gendered order of discourse is likely to take a long time to mend. Transphobic hate speech sustains the 'natural' and 'common sense' status of 'we' by producing the contemptible 'non-we', or the 'other'. The deployment of intertextual and interdiscursive instances of (re)contextualized 'his-story' accounts also serve to solidify the construction of the 'natural we' and 'unnatural other' subjects.

This article establishes that the hegemony of heteropatriarchy in Pakistan is almost absolute and unchallenged at the moment. This could be observed in transgender women' behaviour who seek to hide their transgender identity under the cloak of "economic pressure" and "poverty". They choose to be 'pitied at' for their poverty and thus avoid vilification of their apparent non-conformist gender identity. The preference of certain linguistic choices (i.e. terms of address such as *khusra* or *hijra*) serve to establish an identification paradigm (Rizwan 2019) that takes its meaning from binary opposition between 'the normal self' and 'the deviant other'.

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