

Media Representation of Transgenders in India: Patterns, Perceptions and Policy Implications

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Abstract

Representation of transgender people in the Indian media is an important aspect that is affecting the development of the policy decisions and establishing the correct path for the perceptions of the Indian population. Through the analysis of transgender people representation in different media routes, the study explores the hypothesis on whether such representations are leading to reinforcement of stereotypes or acceptance of the transgender people. It is going to determine the effect of media content on the attitudes of the people on the rights of transgenders and favorable attitudes to the anti-discrimination law. It is a quantitative study where the data was obtained with a stratified sample of 200 respondents represented by the diversity of age, gender, and geographic area. The results show that when the media exposure of the media content increases, especially in scenario of the content being of positive and inclusionary nature, greater support of the transgender rights is seen. Moreover, language and media consumption pattern were observed to be significantly having a moderating effect in attitude towards transgender individuals. The findings highlight the possibility of media as a strong weapon of social change, promoting legislative change and acceptance of transgender societies. It is suggested to promote targeted media interventions, particularly those that are based on regional languages, to increase the level of public awareness and promote more inclusive values of transgender rights acceptance. The creation of study specifically targeting attitudes fostered in society by media over long periods of time in addition to the influence of digital media on the formation of attitude should also be concerned with in the future.

Keywords: Transgender representation, Indian media, Media consumption, public perception, Anti-discrimination laws.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives, shaping how the public perceives gender differences and their impact. This encompasses different kinds of media that incorporate videos, CDs, comic strips, newspapers, magazines, and books (Aksar, 2024). Other things that are done using these media outlets include that of persuasion, surveillance, interpretation, linking, and socialization. Transgender is an important theme of social media and it revolves around culture, religion and thoughts. Transgender gender is discussed in people on such social networks as Facebook and Instagram, where stories are told, and people also strive to persuade others of its significance (Khatun et al., 2024). Such experts as Ustadz Teuku Hanan Attaki use these platforms to discuss trans gender and its significance, comprehending its transformational potential and relation to various ideologies. The Supreme Court of India in the 2014 NALSA case recognized transgendered people as a third gender in India. Understanding the way in which trans gender is covered in the media and considering the relevant study findings, such as books and novels to study the perception of people of trans gender is very important. Studying the representation of transgender individuals both in the context of representation and in the media, the study focuses on the role of the media herein (Manzar, 2024).

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The Indian government officially recognises Hijras as a "third gender" (transgender) since they are a distinct social, religious, and cultural group. The transgender community and activists coined the modern word "transgender" in the 1990s (Al-Mamun, et al., 2022). These days, the term "transgender" has evolved into a "umbrella" term that is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including but not limited to intersex individuals, transsexuals, male and female crossdressers (also called "transvestites

"drag queens," or "drag kings"), and men and women whose appearance or traits are viewed as gender atypical regardless of their sexual preference. Traditionally categorised as the third sex, the Hijra/transgender group has its own distinct gender role in the Indian subcontinent (Sirohi & Noida, 2022). As a result, Hijras as a distinct identity can fall into either category, having characteristics of both genders. The Hijra/Transgender community receives very little assistance, primarily in the form of condom and lubricant distribution or STI/HIV prevention. Hijra and transgender people were included in the subcategories of men having sex with men (MSM). In India, this has been interpreted negatively in relation to how society behaves and views this complicated gender identity (Akter, & Saha, 2024). Since Indian culture is so deeply ingrained in the lives of Hijras and transgender people, it can accept a vast range of temperaments, traits, sexual needs, gender identities, cross-gender behaviours, and levels of commitment without losing its cultural significance. (Nanda, *The Hijras of India: Neither Man nor Woman*).

1.1. Indian cinema

Indian films have developed in depicting transgender individuals. Some films explore the societal, social, and emotional changes in the acceptance of transgender people in the real world. In certain projects, transgender individuals are represented as just intelligently but also as individuals seeking acceptance and recognition. Despite the emergence of new entertainment options due to technological advancements, cinema nevertheless has a loyal fan base (Sirohi & Noida, 2022). Films greatly influence psychology, leading to significant representations of people and societal groups. Many Indian films depicting the third sex are criticised for portraying their lifestyles in a careless and inaccurate manner. Lack of accurate depictions of transgender individuals in the local region perpetuates shameful generalisations (Rafiq, et al., 2024).

1.2. Representation in society

In every aspect of the lives, gender plays a significant role. Humans are forced to adopt absurd conventions and ways of thinking, and the majority of them either consciously or unconsciously study it (Neto, et al., 2019). It seems to be inevitable as it is really ingrained in the culture in which live. It is steadfast, dependable, and seldom questioned. The customs and opinions of each gender are ingrained in childhood itself. Even as the child is developing, they observe the behaviour and appearance of adults of different sexes and use this as a guide to identify as that gender or, more accurately, as conservative (Sirohi & Noida, 2022).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) individuals are often referred to by this acronym. Gender roles pertaining to masculinity, femininity, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are portrayed in a variety of forms in printed media, including newspapers and magazines, as well as in today's social media, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Due to stereotypical media depiction, individuals in today's culture may readily identify gender distinctions (Klomkaew & Knoakpermpoon, 2023). Even worse, hate speech is used in the media in other nations to express prejudice or discrimination against non-binary persons. As proof of this, the LGBTQIA Resource Centre (2020) reports that the term "tranny," which is used by the media to refer to trans individuals, is derogatory and inappropriate. Another example is the derogatory statement, "that is so gay," which characterises a circumstance (Jalonen, 2024).

In India, transgender people have historically experienced severe marginalisation and are often pushed to the outside of society. Known historically as "Hijras," they have experienced social marginalisation and institutionalised prejudice (M Sarwade, 2024). Cultural narratives that have traditionally depicted trans gender identities as abnormal or aberrant are the source of this marginalisation. With the historic Supreme Court ruling in 2014 that acknowledged transgender people as a third gender and upheld their

constitutionally guaranteed rights to equality and respect, the legal acceptance of transgender people has changed. Nevertheless, public acceptability is still low and transgender people continue to experience stigma, discrimination, and violence in many facets of life despite these legislative advancements (Thallapureddy, et al., 2023).

Mostly adhering to the framework of conventional masculinity, the concept of cis-gender sexuality—represented as male and female—has been mainstreamed. Generally speaking, any additional variation has been seen as a departure from religion and social conventions. As a result, the gender binary's social construction has found resonance in media representations, social discourses, and narratives (Qadiri & Sr, 2023). As a result, societies across the globe have made distinctions on issues of body, self, and sexual identity. As a result, societal taboos and cultural preconceptions about gender identity changes have persisted to this day, perceiving these people as the undesirable "other." Despite the fact that certain groups, such as the transgender communities, have been a part of Indian culture for generations, the LGBTQ+ community has a complicated history that has witnessed both difficulties and a recent change (Falck, & Bränström, 2023).

There has been a lot of talk about transgender equality for a long now. Even while certain areas have made progress, the transgender community still faces big problems in getting equal treatment and education (Sani et al., 2023). The government, the press, and regular people all need to work together to do rid of the stigma that surrounds transgender people (Khan, 2020). The governments are also significant in the enactment of laws and rules safeguarding the rights of transgender people and ensuring that they can obtain access to good schools (Mughal et al., 2022). Stigma eradication and making people know and understand how to overcome both their biases and prejudices are of great essence revolving around education (Martins et al., 2020). Adolescence is a difficult period when transgender people have to understand who they are, and it also makes a significant impact on their academic opportunity. Despite the fact that not only transgender adolescents continue to feel the stigma but also endure physical violence in high schools, the social environment, within which they do so, alters with time (de Snoo-Trimp et al., 2022).

The study titled "Portrayal of Transgenders in Indian Media" is very significant because it provides a critical analysis of how different Indian media forms such as television serials, movies, news coverage, web series, and social media shape, reinforce, or challenge public opinion about transgenders. Portrayal of a marginalised community such as the transgenders has the potential to considerably influence their identity, dignity, and rights when communicated through media platforms. The media plays a vital role in the construction of social narratives and in the influence of society views. The study is important because it aims to find patterns of stereotyping, misrepresentation, or invisibility that continue to exist in Indian media. Additionally, it strives to identify instances of depictions that are progressive, respectful, and powerful. Through an examination of narratives presented in the media, the study makes a contribution to the larger conversation on social justice, gender diversity, and inclusiveness. In addition, it offers insights that may be used to teach media artists, legislators, educators, and activists in the process of promoting more truthful and compassionate depictions of transgender persons, which will eventually enable more acceptance, understanding, and equality within Indian society.

The study examines transgender representation in the Indian media and its effect on public perception-clients and policy formulation. It tries to discern whether the content of media restrains prejudice or advances tolerance by employing a quantitative research approach involving a stratified sample of 200 respondents. It examines transgender portrayals through different media types, including television, cinema, news, and digital media, along with public opinion. It also examines the correlation between exposure to these media and people's attitudes toward the transgender community from the perspective of media promotion of anti-discriminatory legislation). Results from the analysis strongly validate that, first, with an exposure to media there is a direct impact on the attitude of people, supporting the promotion of transgender rights; second, the language used and the length of the exposure are also very crucial. The study also paves the way for further study being undertaken on the long-term effects of media exposure and the role social media plays in shaping the younger generation's view about transgender issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Abbott, 2022) examined transgender stories in scripted visual media from the 1960s to the 2010s and made the case that these depictions were damaging and constrained. It made the case that different genres changed how trans individuals were framed, especially how relevant their gender difference was to cisgender characters as well as society (Strang, J. F., et al., 2023). A historical genealogy against transgender rights advocacy and related transphobic lies was seen in the popularity of trans characters in certain genres, indicating that this popular medium still presented a limited view of gender (Anderson, 2020).

This study of the literature (Subramanian, 2024) investigated how transgender migration had been regulated in Indian media by urban, middle-class, Hindu, upper-caste factors. It drew attention to the ways that the political and cultural norms of the upper-caste Hindu middle class family disciplined marginalised groups, including transgender communities, sex workers, Muslim women, and Dalit women. The review aimed to delineate the literature on middle-class family spatial imaginaries and the co-production of middle-class spatial control and transgender visibility in modern media. To comprehend transgender problems in India, that critical perspective had been essential (Sathi, 2023, September).

The study (Tiwari & Sharma, 2023) examined the effects of media-based interventions on how young adults in Delhi NCR perceived transgender individuals. The mixed-methods research study found that media stakeholder intervention had an independent influence on people's beliefs. Those who had negative views previously became more positive afterwards (Barve, 2024). That was how media intrusion transformed as people saw transgender individuals did not shift much based on their gender category. The findings implied that media intervention had been rather helpful in neutralizing negative trans stereotypes in people's minds (Hussain, 2019, May).

Recent study by Rehman et al. (2024) examined the potential roles that the government, the media, and citizens played in order to eliminate stigma and enhance education and equality for transgender individuals. The mixed methods approach was utilized in the study to examine the frequency at which media reported on transgender education and equality and the perceptions people held regarding the issue. It accomplished such a triple by using a quantitative survey of public opinion and a qualitative content analysis of articles published in three popular Pakistani media outlets (Sahana, 2025). With this kind of coverage, people became aware of the transgender community and grew more understanding of it. The government made major progress by passing legislation that helped transgender people (Transgender Act 2018).

1.1 Hypothesis Development

H1: Media consumption behaviours positively influence attitudes toward transgender persons.

The study (Laporte & Eggermont, 2024) looked explored how negative and transphobic news coverage for transgender celebrities affects public support for measures that deal with these problems. It was proven that increased support for policies comes from news coverage that is less transphobic and trans-negative. Interpersonal connection did not lessen the indirect links between transphobia as well as policy support; in fact, it made them stronger. The results show how important it is to separate transgender feelings from transphobia as well trans negative. They also show how parasocial the role of positive news coverage is in improving attitudes and support for policy. This has made it clear that additional in-depth study on transgender ideas will be needed (Poštuvan, et al., 2019).

The study (Sookpornasawan et al., 2024) looked at how Thai teens' negative perceptions of LGBT persons are related to how much they see sexual and gender diversity in the media (GSDM). Of the 553 people who took part in the research, 34.72% said they were LGBT (Berger, M. N., et al., 2022). The study found that persons who identified as LGBT and were allocated female at birth were less likely to be stigmatised than those who were assigned male at birth and were not LGBT. Overall, teens didn't stigmatise LGBT individuals very often, but those who were exposed to NGSDM were more likely to do so. Still, being exposed to PGSDM was connected to decreased stigma. The findings showed how important the media has on shaping how people see LGBT persons, particularly teens (Demant, D., et al., 2021).

The study (Awais Ali Ch. et al., 2024) examined the attitude of respondents in Pakistan to the right of transgender people with the focus on the influence of the media on their way of thinking about the

problem. Through simple random sampling method in determining the impact of various media on the minds and awareness about issues related towards transgender rights, the study will randomize 500 students to different schools. It employed a standard questionnaire to determine the extent to which students were aware of transgender rights, to which degree they accepted the rights and how they perceived various media, such as print media, social media platform, television and online news websites, to influence them. The results revealed that the students were at vast ends both in knowledge where a majority of them were somewhat or very conscious of transgender rights. Old fashion media as in printing and TV was the more neutralistic influence or even negative influence compared to social media which has been found out to be the best media, with great influence on how people perceive transgender persons positively (Wong, et al., 2022).

H2: Frequency of media exposure significantly increases support for anti-discrimination laws protecting transgender persons.

Probing into three major forms of exclusion such as political participation, property ownership and participation in social and cultural operations (Prabhakar, 2013) considered the degree of inclusion with regard to their major avenues of participation and exclusion. Each of these areas indicate more broad based structural issues that are barriers to accessing basic rights and opportunities and maintain marginalisation. Transgendered individuals are also socially excommunicated to main pop culture and social events and thus people feel isolated and less socially accepted in the respective communities. In raising awareness of such structural issues, the study is expected to help understand these shortfalls better and encourage critical revisions of the current scenario so that the transgender population in India becomes better taken care of in the future (Sahoo, S., et al., 2023).

H3: Preferred language of media moderates the relationship between media consumption behaviours and attitudes toward transgender persons.

This question was discussed in recent two-study (Markowitz, 2025), where they requested the participants to write with three various prompts and then displayed a list of randomly selected TED speeches (Study 1) and podcast stories filmed (Study 2). As presented in the data, positive attitudes (i.e., wishing to watch additional videos of the speaker or feeling connected to him or her) had been associated with reduced LSM. According to mediation studies, the negative relationship between LSM and positive views was explained by an individual novelty need fulfilment. Media psychology is also discussed in what it means to the character development and story development and even in implications of LSM research (Kucirkova, 2019).

The study (Arshad et al., 2025) focused on examining the relationship between social media use among students of AJK University and the disordered eating habits. The study involved 300 students of different majors and they employed many instruments to assess their food behavior. The findings revealed that a positive correlational relationship was discovered amid the use of social media and disordered eating habits, with BISR and BICS serving as intermediaries. Females received higher rating on eating attitudes and impulsivity and men on SMUS and BICS. People with psychiatric illnesses and younger people managed to do better on those tests.

H4: Attitude toward transgender persons mediates the relationship between media exposure frequency and support for anti-discrimination laws.

(Zhang & Kato, 2024) purposed of the study was to look at how Japanese university students' perceptions of LGBT people relate to the impact of both new and conventional media. 201 students from a Japanese university (mean age = 20.3 years, SD = 1.467) took part in a survey that evaluated their personal information, views on the impact of media, length of media usage, and attitudes towards LGBT people. The findings showed that participants' perspectives were clearly influenced by new media channels. Additionally, persons who regularly utilise new media are more likely to see LGBT people favourably (Rodgers, & Rousseau, 2022).

The study (Reyes et al., 2024) examined 626 religious, adult, cisgender, heterosexual Filipinos' knowledge, attitudes, and views towards transgender people in relation to their religion. also looked at how age and gender function in this situation. A structural equation model with latent interaction was used in the

investigation. The findings indicated a strong inverse link between transgender knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs with religion. Significant variations in age and gender were seen on these constructs independently, although there was no difference in the intensity of this link between the sexes (Isaacs, N., et al., 2024).

1.2 Research Gap

Media has been said to be key in shaping attitudes toward transgender persons, but little has been studied in terms of how socio-cultural structures such as caste, class, and religion interface with this consideration. While some study approaches the role of specific socio-cultural contexts, the larger question of how intersectional identities might modify media's influence on transgender attitudes remains largely unexplored. Furthermore, even though media interventions may engender a positive impact on attitudes in the short term, little is known about how or whether they translate into long-term social change or become embedded into policy. Future study could therefore delve into how different media (traditional versus digital) interact with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and positions so that collectively, these factors influence public support of transgender rights and anti-discrimination laws.

METHODOLOGY

Research is designed to adopt a quantitative research approach to study the media portrays of trans people in India, the patterns, perception by the crowd, and policy consideration in the country. Diversity is guaranteed with a stratified random sample of 200 participants in terms of age and gender as well as different regions (rural and urban). In this way, it will be possible to conduct an intersectional analysis of social perceptions. A standardized questionnaire with Likert-scale questions was utilized to collect the data to determine the habits of media consumption, attitudes to transgender people, the frequency of showing media, and defense of anti-discrimination legislation, and the most-used language. The questionnaire was conducted in an online environment (including such services as Google Forms and fintech lending marketplace) and is broadly accessible. Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS, whereas hypothesis testing was carried out in AMOS, as the relationships among major variables were studied. The primary data gathered was complemented by secondary data, which included the primary sources on government publications and former researches about the topic to provide an effective overview of the topic.

S. No	Variable Name	No. Items
1	Media consumption behaviours	5
2	Attitudes toward transgender persons	5
3	Frequency of media exposure	5
4	Support for anti-discrimination laws	5
5	preferred language	5

3.1 Conceptual frame work

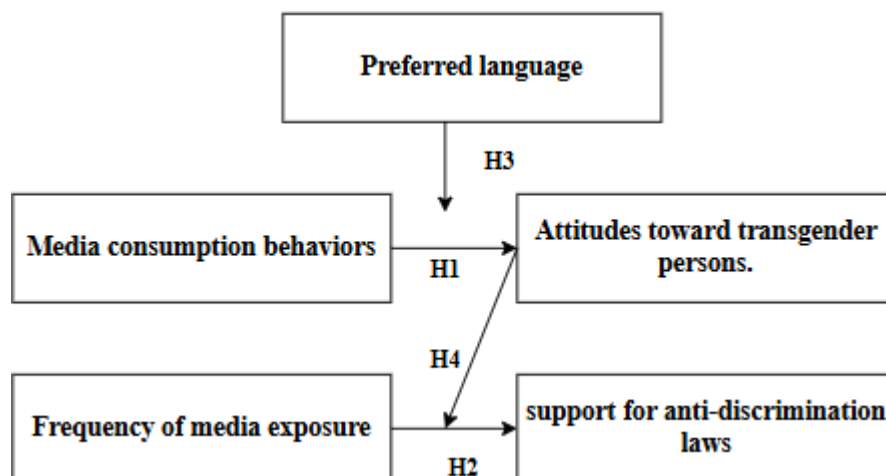


Figure 1 Conceptual frame work

Source: Authors own compilation

The conceptual framework above looks at how media-related things affect how people think and behave towards transgender persons. Four hypotheses (H1–H4) are put forward to demonstrate how different things affect one other. According to H1, the first thing that affects how individuals feel about transgender persons is the media they consume, such as the kind of media they choose and how they engage with it. This means that seeing or hearing about a wider range of media may lead to better views. H2 then says that how frequently individuals interact with the media affects how much they favour anti-discrimination laws. This might mean that hearing more tales about transgender issues could make people more aware of them and push for laws. H3 suggests that a person's media consumption habits are influenced by their favourite language. This demonstrates how language shapes media access and perception, which may influence opinions. Lastly, H4 emphasises the media's powerful influence in influencing public opinion by proposing that the frequency of media exposure also significantly affects sentiments towards transgender people.

3.2 Objectives

The second aims at gaining information regarding what people perceive about transgender persons, primarily influence through the media. The component checks familiarity, prejudice, and extent of acceptance in the general public.

- To investigate how transgender individuals are depicted across different formats of Indian media. Including film, television, news, and digital platforms and to assess the impact of these portrayals on public perception.
- To evaluate the influence of media consumption patterns on societal attitudes toward transgender persons, focusing on how engagement with inclusive or biased content shapes public opinion.
- To explore how the frequency of media exposure and the language used in content contribute to public support for transgender rights, particularly anti-discrimination policies.
- To analyze the role of public attitudes as a mediator in the relationship between media exposure and advocacy for transgender-inclusive legislation, highlighting the psychological and social dynamics involved.

RESULTS

Table 1 Demographic variable

Demographic variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	74	37.0

	Female	55	27.5
	Non-binary	71	35.5
	Total	200	100.0
Age	18-25 Years	62	31.0
	26-40 Years	67	33.5
	40 and older	71	35.5
	Total	200	100.0
Region	Urban	110	55.0
	Rural	90	45.0
	Total	200	100.0

The study sample includes 200 participants, with a well equal distribution among gender identities. Males represent 37.0% (n=74) of the participants, while females account for 27.5% (n=55). Notably, non-binary persons comprise a major component of the sample, accounting for 35.5% (n=71) of the total responses. The age distribution of the participants exhibits a little bias towards older demographics. The biggest section of the sample falls into the '40 and older' group, making up 35.5% (n=71) of the participants. This is closely followed by the '26-40 Years' age group, which accounts for 33.5% (n=67). The youngest age group, '18-25 Years', comprises 31.0% (n=62) of the overall sample. The sample has a greater representation from metropolitan areas than from rural locations. A majority of participants, 55.0% (n=110), live in metropolitan environments. On the other hand, those from rural areas make up 45.0% (n=90) of the total study population.

Table 2 Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Media consumption behaviours	0.817	0.80337751	0.62491904
Attitudes toward transgender persons	0.868	0.82154162	0.66332571
Frequency of media exposure	0.903	0.85012143	0.73629393
Support for anti-discrimination laws	0.865	0.81972309	0.65924076
preferred language	0.872	0.8276023	0.67736949

The constructs in the study have excellent internal consistency and construct validity, which means they may be used for another research. The Cronbach's Alpha scores for all constructs were above the normal threshold of 0.70, with values which ranged from 0.817 (Media Consumption Behaviours) to 0.903 (Frequency of Media Exposure). This shows that the items within each construct are quite consistent with each other. The Composite Reliability (CR) values likewise go beyond the permissible limit of 0.70, which shows that the constructions are reliable. The highest value is 0.8501 for Frequency of Media Exposure. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are higher than 0.50, which means they have strong convergent validity. The AVE values range from 0.6249 (Media Consumption Behaviours) to 0.7363 (Frequency of Media Exposure). These metrics show that the measuring model is both reliable and valid, and that the items do a good job of capturing the desired aspects of media effect, attitudes, and support for transgender rights.

Table 3 Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship			Estimate	C.R.	Sig. P-Value	Results
H1	Media consumption behaviors	---->	Attitudes toward transgender persons	0.76	8.122	***	Accepted
H2	Frequency of media exposure	---->	Support for anti-discrimination laws	0.509	5.812	***	Accepted
Moderating							
H3	ZMedia consumption behaviors	---->	ZAttitudes toward transgender persons	0.43	7.407	***	Accepted
	ZPreferred language	---->	ZAttitudes toward transgender persons	0.357	6.151	***	
	Interaction(ZMedia consumption behaviors*ZPreferred language)	---->	ZAttitudes toward transgender persons	0.13	2.241	0.25	
Mediating							
H4	Frequency of media exposure	---->	Attitudes toward transgender persons	0.609	10.828	***	Accepted
	Frequency of media exposure	---->	Support for anti-discrimination laws	0.392	6.446	***	

	Attitudes toward transgender persons	---->	Support for anti-discrimination laws	0.424	6.978	***	
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H1: Media consumption behaviours positively influence attitudes toward transgender persons.

Acceptance was given to the hypothesis (H1) that attitudes towards transgender people are favourably impacted by media consumption habits. A substantial and statistically significant direct correlation is shown by the strong positive estimate of 0.76, a highly large critical ratio (C.R.) of 8.122, and a p-value denoted by '***' (typically $p < 0.001$). This indicates that people's perceptions of transgender individuals are likely to shift in a positive direction if their media consumption habits alter.

H2: Frequency of media exposure significantly increases support for anti-discrimination laws protecting transgender persons.

It was decided to adopt hypothesis H2, which proposed a correlation between the frequency of media exposure and support for anti-discrimination laws. A statistically significant direct relationship is shown by the results, which show a positive estimate of 0.509, a significant critical ratio (C.R.) of 5.812, and a '***' p-value. This is a positive correlation between media exposure frequency and the likelihood of endorsing anti-discrimination laws.

H3: Preferred language of media moderates the relationship between media consumption behaviours and attitudes toward transgender persons.

According to the moderating analysis for H3, Z Preferred Language and Z Media Consumption Patterns each independently moderate Z Attitudes towards transgender people. With a C.R. of 7.407 ('***' p-value) and an estimate of 0.43, media consumption habits show a substantial moderating effect, suggesting a considerable influence on attitudes. Likewise, Z Preferred language has a moderating effect as well, with a C.R. of 6.151 and an estimate of 0.357, indicating that it plays a role in attitude formation. Though the individual significance of the interaction term's p-value is not explicitly provided beyond the C.R., the interaction term (ZMedia consumption behaviours ZPreferred language) also shows an estimate of 0.13 and a C.R. of 2.241, indicating that the combined effect of media consumption behaviours and preferred language significantly influences attitudes towards transgender persons.

H4: Attitude toward transgender persons mediates the relationship between media exposure frequency and support for anti-discrimination laws.

According to the mediation analysis for H4, opinions towards transgender people act as a mediating factor between the frequency of media exposure and support for anti-discrimination laws. There is a strong and significant correlation between the frequency of media exposure and opinions on transgender people (estimate = 0.609, C.R. = 10.828, '***' p-value). Likewise, there is a strong correlation between the frequency of media exposure and support for anti-discrimination laws (estimate = 0.392, C.R. = 6.446, '***' p-value). A significant predictor of support for anti-discrimination laws is perceptions about transgender people (estimate = 0.424, C.R. = 6.978, '***' p-value). These results together provide credence to the idea that perceptions about transgender people serve as a significant moderator in the relationship between media exposure frequency and support for anti-discrimination laws.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study provide crucial information on how people's views about transgender individuals in India, how they use the media, and how the media portrays them (Khatun, & Samaddar, 2021). A robust and inclusive data collection is ensured by the sample's demographic distribution, which demonstrates an equal inclusion of different gender identities and age groups. A large number of respondents identified as non-binary, which shows that the study is relevant to people of all genders (Scandurra, et al., 2019). The urban-rural representation adds even more geographic variation by showing a range of social and cultural experiences related to how people see and use media. Based on the reliability and validity tests, the study's constructs, such how individuals consume media, how they feel about

transgender persons, how often they see media, and how much they support anti-discrimination legislation, are obviously conceptually and statistically sound. The Cronbach's Alpha and AVE values show that the measurement model is suitable since they show that it is internally consistent and convergently valid (Reisner, & Hughto, 2019).

The results of the hypothesis test show how significant the media is in shaping public opinion and support for transgender rights. Hypothesis H1 says that there is a substantial positive link between how individuals feel about transgender persons and how they use the media (Bowers, & Whitley, 2020). This finding is in line with the theoretical principles under which the conceptual idea of empathy, stigma reduction, and challenge of bias can be accomplished through exposure to factual and inclusive media content. Individuals tend to accept positive constructs particularly when they encounter narratives and descriptions that anthropomorphize transgender lives. Hypothesis H2 points out to the effectiveness of the frequency of media exposure in galvanising support to anti-discrimination legislation (Read, et al., 2020). The better people know and understand transgender issues, the higher is the level of support of protective legislation, and it appears that this concern is reflected when people get to know about transgender-related information. This once again asserts the media as the agent of social and legislative change besides its role as an informant (Adamczyk, et al., 2020).

The moderating effects explored by H3 show complicated patterns. Media consumption habits and favorite language significantly moderate attitudes, which means that the media and the language of information conveyance are rather important (Chamcham, et al., 2024). This is especially applicable in a multilingual nation such as India where localised outlooks tend to be influenced by regional language media. Due to the high dependence between media use and a preferred language, it is possible that pro-transgender stories will perform better when they are presented in user-friendly linguistic packages with tailored text. The mediation model (H4) provides a good case against the direct channel through which the media influences policy support (Salem, et al., 2023). Attitudes towards transgender people are one of the key mediating variables that indicate further changes in the attitude after exposure to the media that will further lead to support of anti-discrimination laws. This is a multi-stage procedure that highlights the relative role of attitude change as a prior requirement of social participation and endorsement of policies (Krishnakumar, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that the attitude of the Indian population toward the transgender people and the extent to which they receive support on the part of lawmakers significantly depend on their frequency of watching and reading the news. The results indicate that enthusiasm and the occurrence of frequent positive coverage in the media can cause positive attitudes and the approval of anti-discriminatory policies. Inclusive, advanced, and simple to grasp media can not only represent but also create the ideas of the society. In addition, indicating that language and attitudes can either influence the intervening impact of media on people across sociolinguistic situations demonstrates the complexity of this matter. The study found that targeted media interventions, especially those that are tailored to regional languages, may have a big impact on public opinion and help under-represented groups achieve equality. The study basically gives real-world proof that utilising the media as a tool for policy change and social inclusion is a good idea. The results show how important it is for media professionals, lawmakers, and activists to show transgender living in a responsible, diversified, and true way. Future study might expand on this by looking at the long-term effects of media exposure and how social media platforms influence younger viewers in the fast-changing digital world.

6.1 Implications

The study work indicates that there are major changes in the social and media policy to be made based on this finding. The fact that the relationship between media exposure and support of anti-discrimination legislation is positive means that media has the potential to become a useful ally when it comes to shaping the attitude and advancing the rights of transgender people. The inclusiveness and positivity of media representations can be positioned strategically as a tool used by media outlets and policymakers alike to

influence the perceptions of society and stimulate its support of marginalized communities on the legislative level. Moreover, the way people consume the media and the place of language indicates that region-specific and linguistically differentiated interventions should be conducted. These medial campaigns may contribute to greater inclusion of society and promote sympathetic and compassionate approach to transgender individuals. Moreover, the study underlines the significance of the role of media as advocacy instrument, policy change and human rights promotion, especially to the transgender individuals which have been historically discriminated and marginalized in India.

6.2 Limitations

As much as the study offers insightful findings, there are a number of limitations that one should be aware of. To begin with, the study has a cross-sectional design; therefore, it does not allow concluding on the cause-and-effects relationship with time. Longitudinal study might be used in the future in order to see the influence of the prolonged media exposure on this topic and its effects on the attitudes of society toward transgender people. Moreover, the 200 sample size is sufficiently large however the sample is not diverse enough to represent the whole population of India due to its geographic and cultural diversity. The other possible important demographic variables like caste, class, and religion have also been excluded because of the main inclusion of urban and rural location aspects of the research. In addition, all the data is self-reported, the data is prone to social desirability or response bias. Lastly, the study has not probed deep into the subtle nature of social media use given that it is a relatively new research field, especially when dealing with younger generations in the digital age.

6.3 Recommendation for further study

As both society and media in India undergo changes, there is a lot of need for further study on how transgender people are portrayed in the media. In order to better understand how different languages and cultures are represented in the media, future studies might compare and contrast regional and national platforms. Study may also look at how trans producers and influencers are finding more agency on social media and other digital platforms, which is changing transgender narratives compared to more conventional, cisgender-dominated depictions. It could also be helpful to look at how these images changed people's minds, laws, as well as the mental health for transgender persons. Longitudinal studies might be done to keep an eye on how transgender rights laws and social standards develop over time, as well as how transgender individuals are portrayed in the media. Also, looking at things like caste, class, religion, as well as geographic location, and other intersections, may help to get a more complete picture of how transgender people are portrayed in Indian media.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. No financial, institutional, or personal relationships have influenced the interpretation, findings, or reporting of this research. All efforts have been made to ensure objectivity and transparency in the collection, analysis, and presentation of the data.

Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree with its submission to the journal.

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