# Role of Social Media in Offsetting Gendered Discrimination: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Mehrab Moiz Awaan's Podcast on YouTube

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**ABSTRACT:** This study explores the multifaceted role of social media in the lives of transgender, focusing on how digital platforms such as you tube facilitate identity expression, community building and resistance against social stigma. The research uses qualitative methods to explore the discursive practices used by Mehrab Awan to challenge dominant narratives of patriarchy and marginalization. The finding reveals highlights the media capacity to give voice to marginalized gender identities, challenge patriarchy, correct misconception of transgender, and humanize gender diversity.  Social media also create counter discourse against discrimination and enable to reconstruct identities. Overall, social media emerges as vital source where transgender individuals negotiate their identities, foster social support and resist hegemonic structures.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Offsetting, Gendered Discrimination, Critical Discourse Analysis, Mehrab Moiz Awan

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## Introduction

The issue of gender identity transcends the dual role of the male and female concept but incorporate the so-called third gender. Transgender is socially excluded, discriminated and misrepresented. They are easily affected with difficulties in employment, medical protection, legal safeguard and additional social engagement (khan, 2021). Since it is clear that transgender is an outcast and they are discriminated against in various social engagements, even in their own households they are assumed to be a burden. Such marginalization is not only caused by cultural and structural differences but is created and strengthened to some extent by the use of discourse. Fairclough (1995) argued that discourse is a reflection and at the same time, social relations are made and molded by discourse.

Studies in the media are being developed that describe transgender people in sensational and stereotypical perceptions where they are feebly portrayed as pitiful victims and deviance (Capuzza, 2014). This description adds stigma and restricts the chances of transgender to turn into a respectful and legal citizen. Pakistani media has not been a different case though, Asghar and Shahzad, (2018) analysis of media representation of transgender people in Pakistan- A case study of Misgendered and marginalization further exposes the recurrent and cyclical stereotypes approaching transphobic disenfranchisement. The study also reveals that such terms like prostitute, drug and human traffickers and pick pockets are often related in the news stories.

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Nevertheless, research also has indicated that alternative that gender equality can be found on social media. Transgender youth can use social media as a place of support and encouragement, providing trans individuals with the impression of validation and confirmation of their identity. Through the online interaction with trans-positive communities, the adolescents can better deal with the gendered discrimination they experience in the offline world (Selkie et al., 2020). Social media has offered new platforms to trans people to formulate social, political and personal identities concerning their identities (Primo et al., 2019). Also, it offers an effective visibility and advocacy platform. They use social media to create awareness, presume inclusiveness, and fix microaggression against transgender individuals (Cannon et al., 2017). In the qualitative research article Transition, Connection, Disconnection, and social media: Examining the Digital Lived Experiences of Transgender Individuals (Cannon et al., 2017) social media is discussed as the venue of developing social ties, obtaining education, and sharing repatriated resources, which would not otherwise be accessible to people on the outskirts of society. The outcome highlights how counselors should be familiar with online resources and apply supportive models that can meet the online experience of transgender persons.

Based on this aspect, it is important to analyze the way in which social media embodies the third gender. The knowledge of whether social media replicates stereotypes, or tries to compensate the discrimination, gives insights into the ideological influence social media exerts on the formation of the consciousness of society. Thus, the paper will analyze patterns of discourse on the social media to find out how the third gender is being represented and whether these patterns can help to eliminate gendered discrimination or sustain it.

## Problem Statement

In modern world media plays significant role in facilitating and strengthening prejudices on the social, political and economic sphere. On the same note, it has given precedence to the gendered discourse, especially, the transgender debate. As transgender is being depicted and framed very negatively over decades in media. Media not only strengthens the prejudices and discrimination that still kept the focus of the scholars over decades but also puts it in balance. Since media talk frequently enacts dual action, it supports and legitimizes gendered stereotypes simultaneously, particularly social media as it is also an avenue of advancing equality and redressing the balance of social discourses. As an example, the social media has been important in countering this discrimination because it has given a proper platform where individuals share their experiences, voice their voices, and facilitate discourse on gender discrimination.

## Research Questions

1. What ways Mehrab Moiz Awan used to breaks typical gender binaries and patriarchal norms in the podcast?
2. How does the podcast use social media as a discursive space to challenge gendered discrimination and give voice to marginalized identities?

## Research Objectives

1. To analyze the non-binary and transgender identities that Mehrab Moiz Awan negotiates and constructs through discourse in the podcast.
2. To examine the potential of social media podcasts as a method of challenging gendered discrimination in Pakistani society.

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## Significance of the Study

In modern world media plays significant role in facilitating and strengthening prejudices on the social, political and economic sphere. On the same note, it has given precedence to the gendered discourse, especially, the transgender debate. As transgender is being depicted and framed very negatively over decades in media. This research aims to study the potential of social media in giving voices to marginalized, challenging the hegemonic norms, and reconstruction of transgender identities.

## Literature Review

The social media has emerged as an important place where transgender and gender minority people can express themselves, network and form their identities. Cannon et al., (2017) discusses about the experiences of transgender adults utilizing social media, which can serve as sources of social interactions, education, and sharing of resources, which otherwise would not be available. The analysis of their research found two key themes the social media as an instrument of genuine self-expression and as a communication channel that is also critical in the establishment of social contacts. The authors also focus on the need to find the significance of gender-related individuals with the use of social media and recommends using theoretical constructs in increased attempts to approach identity optimization through the medium of digital bridging and disconnection (Cannon et al., 2017).

On the same note, a study based on a focus group of 17 sexual and gender minority social media users having different LGBTQ+ identities attributed to them indicated that, despite online harm and perceived challenges, the social media sites are critical in offering the sexual and gender minority groups places where they feel accepted and understood. This paper uses the notion of front region performances by Goffman to describe how people control their online identities, which involves an instantiation of self-addressing to the demands of the social. Also, the theories of feeling rules and framing rules offered by Hochschild are employed to enhance the insight into how the emotional expression in these online performances is socially regulated and illustrate the complicated emotional labor of online identity formation (Colosi et al., 2023).

In a more recent paper, Hokkanen, (2023) examined how Finnish nonbinary and transgender people interacted with the idea of mediated intimacy in their interactions with social media, using media diaries and interviews as the primary tools of analysis. This model highlights the conflict between the private and the public realm of data-driven digital media, placing the identity construction in the context of the current politically heated Western cultural environment of gender and sexuality. The argument of Hokkanen is that mediated intimacy enables political subjectivities outside the old activism, and this involves both affective and infrastructural aspects of using social media. It also creates emotional relations and conventional cultural scenes that interfere with the sentiments of belonging and self-identity. Non-cisgender people, however, find navigating these mediated places potentially thrilling to construct multifaceted affective digital imaginaries that reinforce and challenge their identity experiences. This research criticizes the accounts that online networks become simple stimulants of the spread of ideological identity and is focused on the agency of individual people in their online and offline identity performances (Hokkanen, 2023).

All these studies demonstrate the role of social media in the life of transgender and gender minorities is. They offer platforms of true self-expression, socialization and political participation coupled with threats of

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emotional work, online ills, and negotiation of identity in larger cultural and political grounds. These relations are also critical to understand because they are one of the key aspects that can be identified by researchers, professionals, and policy-makers to serve the marginalized gender identities in more digitalized societies.

## Methodology

### Research Design

In the current study, the qualitative research design is taken, and the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used as a theoretical framework to examine the use of language and discourse in the Mehrub Moiz Awan podcast to counter the gendered discrimination on social media. Its suitability lies in the fact it allows one to take a profound look at the interaction between language, power, ideology, and social practices with specific emphasis on ways in which marginalized gender identities are constructed and challenged in the media texts.

### Theoretical Framework

The analysis is based on the three-dimensional model of CDA by Norman Fairclough that considers the discourse on three levels that are interdependent:

- Textual analysis: The vocabulary, grammar and rhetoric used in text.
- Discursive practice: The production, distribution, and consumption of the meanings.
- Social practice: The bigger social-cultural picture, on the influences and effects of discourse on social power relations.

However, the focus is on the discursive practices that how trans gender identity is constructed and how the binary gender identity and the hegemony is challenged through language.

### Data Collection

The data collection consists of the selected episodes from you tube. The episodes were chosen on the basis of the Thematic relevance to gender identity, discrimination and empowerment. The episode is than transcribe for discourse analysis.

### Data Analysis

This paper follows the Critical Discourse Analysis approach by Fairclough putting emphasis on the discursive practices. At this level, the paper analyzed the language use in the podcast in producing, negotiating and transforming social identities and power relations based on gender. The discussion was concerned with the ways in which patriarchal dominant ideologies are challenged with the formation of counter-discourses, the ways in which gender binary is challenged, and the ways in which marginal gender identities are reclaimed and reflected. This paper examined how the podcast opens up and challenges the structures of patriarchal power and how some violences and disparities may remain concealed, and voices obscured by the dominant discourse are amplified.

In this chapter, the researcher studies the discursive practices applied by the Mehrub Moiz Awan in the podcast to comprehend that in accordance with the role of social media in gender discrimination offsetting. It is centered on the macro level of discursive practice by Fairclough that deals with reinforcing, constructing

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and challenging ideologies. The analysis also identifies how the podcast is a counter-hegemonic space in which the transgender identities have been constructed through different discourses that have been put across against the mainstream gender ideologies.

One of such bright examples can be observed in his statement: people believe that I have both organs, however, it is not true. This is a direct confrontation to one of the myths regarding the transgender bodies in Pakistan. The existence of such myths can be maintained due to the lack of providing proper information about transgender identities in mainstream and traditional media. In revising this misinformation on a digital medium that can be accessed publicly, the speaker is disrupting discriminatory knowledge systems in the active process. Publicly explaining the reality of the body puts transgender identity in a new perspective, and no longer something abnormal. This shows the level to which social media neutralizes discrimination: it turns out to be a platform where the right to determine the marginal identity is negated by the society as a whole and instead it gets to the hands of the marginalized.

The other outstanding one is the repetition of the statement: I was not supposed to talk at home; everybody makes decisions on my behalf. This indicates a patriarchal system that is embedded in the denial of autonomy and voice to the gender-nonconforming people. Sphere of home is turned into a location of silencing, the control and decision-making in the enforcement of gendered conformity. With the help of the podcast, the speaker is assigned back the voice that was before. This silencing to speech before a crowd is a discursive change of direction. The social media not only mitigates the discrimination by providing the platform but also allows the oppressed people to re-write the relations of power that structured their lives.

Equally, her critique of social uneasiness "People want me to take sides so they can pretend they are comfortable enough to relax their religious dogma ideological orthodoxy. This remark shows the invisible social law according to which gender has to become fixed and writable. As she declines to be placed in forced categories, she upsets the ideological basis of dichotomous gender expectations. With the help of the podcast, such criticism is accessible to the audience which hardly experiences such disruptions of the established norms, and social media serves as a medium of ideological assault.

The fact of the speaker being harassed in public places, specifically in the bathrooms they would ridicule him, demand to know what he was, shows how a gendered space enables the rules of patriarchy to be upheld. The bathrooms are symbolic spaces where gender is strictly patrolled. Her story reveals such daily violence that makes the humiliation that happens in the bathroom a personal experience a social form of injustice. Such stories are not aired by traditional media, yet through social media they are widely disseminated changing how people view harassment as an example of abnormality to discrimination and institutional aspect of it.

Institutional discrimination is brought out when she states: People demands that I choose male or female; there is no room of persons like me. This example shows how the state is involved in the implementation of binary gender norms onto the level of official language. These binaries that are institutionally entrenched are a contributor to systemic exclusion. The speaker is also publicly criticizing the administrative forms, an action that questions the legality of how gender is defined by the state. The social media balances out discrimination by bringing exposure to institutional discrimination and having more expansive discussions around reform.

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Her humorous use of humor like the one where she thinks that her identity is confusing people, perhaps time to update the software, is a very delicate but effective discursive resource. Humor applies a new spin to the problem, labeling the problem as something caused by the backwardness of the society and not by its own fault. This is a cause of shifting of the ideological burden of the marginalized figure to the prevailing social structure. Since humor can be propagated easy on social media, this criticism is more effectively spread, which makes a social media a place where resistant meanings propagate.

Additionally, when she says: By sharing an experience in front of people, she alters the spectacle because her body was a kind of a joke a spectacle. Her story relocates her but does not make her an object of derision but a subject with power and agency. Social media cannot be underrated in this regard: it is a chance of the proponents of marginalization to have a say in their representation, and decades of misrepresentation in mainstream media are offset.

Once collectively, these illustrations demonstrate a challenge to patriarchal silencing, gender binarism, moral stigma, institutional exclusion, everyday violence, and myth based discrimination, which is created through the podcast.

The speaker challenges the ideological underpinnings of gender discrimination through narrative, through correction, through humor, through critique and through exposure. These resistant meanings are exaggerated by social media and thus, this allows them to be spread among various audiences and brings about discursive changes that would not be possible through traditional media.

## Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that social media networks are an essential space that gender marginalities adopt to speak, confront patriarchal ideas and disorient mainstream discourses of stigma and silence. By building counter-narratives, social media makes it easier to correct trans people about the false beliefs about transgender identities and humanizes people of gender diversity, as well as reveals the structural causes of discrimination in the society. As it allows having a free and subtle conversation about identity, trauma, and resistance, social media can be a significant tool of challenging gender-based discrimination and encouraging social awareness and change within a rather patriarchal setting. These results facilitate the revolutionary power of digital platforms to facilitate gender inclusivity and social justice.

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