

Representation of Transgenders in Visual Media: A Critical Analysis of LGBTQ Youth-perception

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Abstract

This research investigates how visual media films and television shows represent transgender people and how LGBTQ youth develop perceptions of the content. Content analysis was carried out on the films *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Ashiqui*, as well as the television shows *The Kapil Sharma Show* and *MTV Roadies*. *Laxmii* creates transphobia, while *Chandigarh Kare Ashiqui* supports transgender characters. On the other hand, *The Kapil Sharma Show* objectifies transgender for comics and humour, whereas *MTV Roadies* represents it more positively. The in-depth qualitative research affirms that the visual media films and television shows do not represent the lived reality of transgender persons, as the cisactors play a role. The portrayal of transgender people in humour promotes harmful stereotypes. Hence, this research proposes that the visual media should include transgender characters for the representation of reality and avoid objectifying them for humour. The representation of a positive image in an inclusive society is imperative.

Keywords: LGBTQ; Media perception; Representation; Transgender.

Introduction

Television and films have an enormous impact on public perceptions, particularly in terms of identity and representation, making them critical areas for study for understanding transgender portrayals. These forms of visual communication have potential to build opinions and attitudes about various issues and communities. Unfortunately, transgender people are represented in Bollywood films and television shows to tell the other stories. The characters of Bollywood films, representing transgender

people, are usually confined to the background, used for comedic relief, or grouped with other sexual “deviants” like the homosexual, the effeminate, or the cross dresser (Afshana, Syeda, and Heeba Din 62). Misrepresentation in the media often cultivates negative images of transgender identities reinforcing harmful stereotypes (Dhiman).

The Transgender people belong to minority communities, and recognition of their positive identity is important for social acceptance. Yet, the media frequently project them as objects of ridicule, dressing them in exaggerated costumes and depicting in such a way as if they come from some other planet (Jobe). However, such portrayals deny the humanity of transgender people, who like everyone else have emotions, experiences, and desire. They deserve to be seen as full human beings, not as sub humans. When the media continues negative stereotypes, it creates transphobia (negative sentiments or discrimination against transgender individuals), further marginalizing them (Nagoshi et al).

Misrepresentation in films and television shows has a great impact on the transgender community, particularly on LGBTQ youth. Seeing themselves portrayed badly might lead to low self-image and internalized transphobia. Positive depiction is thus critical for creating an inclusive culture and promoting the well-being of transgender youth.

The term LGBTQ (for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer”) is widely used to refer to persons and communities who identify as members of sexual or gender minorities. According to GLAAD’s media reference guide, (“transgender” is defined as “an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth”)(GLAAD *Media Reference Guide – 11th Edition | GLAAD*). Transgender people can identify as male, female, gender queer, non-binary, gender fluid, bisexual, and more (Tilak and Singh).

This research explores how films and television shows represent transgender persons, and how LGBTQ youth perceive the content represented. It also examines whether misrepresentation in visual communication creates transphobia in society and proposes strategies for media to construct positive identities of the transgender persons. However, transgender persons have been represented in many different types of contemporary media, from traditional media like television and films to online media like podcasts and social networking sites (Mcinroy and Craig). But limited studies have been conducted on transgender representation from the per-

spectives of LGBTQ youth perception. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for building positive images of transgender people and fostering more inclusive society.

Review of Literature

(Dhiman) mainly emphasized on evolving media coverage of transgender individuals towards inclusivity. He found that media coverage of transgender people has evolved and progressed a lot, but challenges persist. Unfortunately, transgender people still have to deal with prejudice and exclusion, which are further, crystallized by the media. The researcher has suggested that the media needs to be ethical and inclusive while representing transgender people. The media outlets require continued improvement and accountability while representing the social group.

(Tilak and Singh) mainly analyse the media representation of transgender people in print and visual media. In this research, they find that visual advertisements portray positive images of the transgender community, while print, in the past portrayed a negative image that has changed over time. After analyzing 100 sample questionnaires taken from different people (men and women), it was found that 50 percent of respondents didn't know about the transgender rights issued by the government. This was basically print media that failed to inform people about rights and regulations. The researcher also found that 40 percent of participants expressed their solidarity with the transgender community. They viewed that more representation of transgender people.

(Cook) content analysis of nine television shows from the 2016–2017 season across the broadcasting and streaming platforms, mainly focuses on the representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. This research finds that the representation of LGBTQ people has improved since 2001, and as a result, now, they are displayed with more affection instead of jokes.

(Afshana, Syeda, and Heeba Din) analyzes the representation of *Hijra* in the Bollywood movies: *Sadak* (1991), *Tamnna* (1995), *Shabnum Mausi* (2005), and *Welcome To Sajanpur* (2008). This research attempted to understand how movies are breaking the stereotypes assigned towards the third gender. It indicates that these movies have succeeded in breaking the stereotypes and portraying them in a humanistic way. These movies not only bring the third gender to the center from the periphery but also attempt to show the socioeconomic conditions in which they live.

Methodology

This research was carried out with the technique of content analysis of the selected Bollywood films and television shows, and primary data collection using semi-structured questionnaires to explore the opinions and experiences from the respondents.

On purposive sampling methods, the films *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, and the Television episodes *MTV Roadies* and *The Kapil Sharma Show*, were selected for content analysis. The content studies were focused on the units such as dialogues, images and costumes, to explore how LGBTQ persons perceived the content, represented in these visual media.

The recent films *Laxmii and Chandigarh Kare Ashiqui* were chosen because the characters representing transgender people play leading roles in the films. Raghava Lawrence's *Laxmii* is a Hindi-language horror-comedy film was released in 2020, in which Akshay Kumar is playing a transgender character. Abhishek Kapoor's *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* is a Hindi romantic drama film in which Vaani Kapoor portrays a transwoman. This provides a fresh viewpoint on the love narrative. The television show, *The Kapil Sharma Show*, was chosen because it has a vast viewership. It has gained popularity for comedy and cross-dressing for a long time. This show invites prominent guest's performers from diverse backgrounds. The reality show *MTV Roadies* was included in the study for its reality show. This show is youth-oriented, and this research targets LGBTQ youth for qualitative analysis of their perceptions. This show has gained wide popularity among youth, and it also gives LGBTQ people the opportunity to participate in the program.

The explorative research collected primary data from 20 LGBTQ youth belonging to the age group 18-25 through in-depth interview via phone. Since young people, especially those belonging to this age group, are more likely to be heavy viewers of the visual media and be influenced by it, the LGBTQ youth were purposely included in the sample. The interviews through phone used semi-structured questionnaires to gather opinions and experiences from the respondents. To explore the opinions and experiences, the questionnaires indicated the variables such as how character in the film do justice to the identities of LGBTQ, how the participation of transgender in reality show increase their acceptability, how objectifying of transgender harm their identity, whether the representation in the shows spread transphobia, how representation can promote

positive identities.

Findings and Analysis

This section, findings, and analysis contains the discussion on the primary data focusing on the research objectives: 1. How the selected films and television shows depict transgender persons; 2. What is the impact of perception on the LGBTQ youth; 3. Critical examination of possible transphobia in the society; 4. Proposing for media representation for the construction of positive identities of this social group.

1. Transgender representation in the films and television shows

The research explored on how transgender persons find representation in the Bollywood films and popular television shows. For this end, the contents of the two films *Laxmii* (2020), *Chandigarh Kare Ashquie* (2021), and the two television shows namely *The Kapil Sharma Show* and *MTV Roadies* were studied. The units such as dialogues, imagery representation and costumes were examined in these samples. The findings have been summarized under two main categories a) Reality representation, b) Misrepresentation of reality.

a) Reality-representation

The reality representation means that whether, the visual media such as films and television shows, through dialogues, characters, costumes, are intended to represent true identity, and the reality of life situation as lived by the transgender persons. The finding shows that the film *laxmii*, at great extent, has succeeded in portraying the real-life situation of transgender persons (Sharma). This film shows the struggle faced by transgender and it also acknowledges the existence of transgender identity. The film projects transgender as *Ardhanareshwari* which emphasizes the notion of gender oneness and by doing that it promotes inclusivity. The film ends with a beautiful dialogue *hamne male female transgender as nam dekar inko alag kardiya hai, dekha jayee to jab emotion ki baat aati hai to sab ek hi hai* which means we have separated them by names, but when it comes to emotions, we are all the same. It basically signifies that all human beings are the same with regards to emotion and feelings irrespective of gender identity. Such representation in the visual media promotes inclusivity and cohesiveness in society.

The film *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* finds positive appreciation for break-

ing up of usual stereotypical representation. For instance, Transwoman is merely a man dressed in a *sari* (*western attire mainly wears by women*) (Vaani Kapoor). The films usually represent transgender in this form which does represent reality. It attempts to provide an authentic representation of transgender individuals, and their experiences. The film narrates the love story between Mannu and Manvi, where Manvi reveals that she was assigned male at birth but never felt that way. She has undergone surgery to be converted into female sex. The film portrays Manvi as a strong and independent transgender woman, who stands up for her dignity and pride (Kukreja). It also showcases the support of her father who says *tu mera beta beti dono hai* which means that you are my son and daughter both. This representation reflects the reality of transgender individuals and their journey towards self-acceptance. In essence, this film tries to create space for those who are marginalized and tell that they are also human beings (Aggarwal 60).

On the other hand, the television show, *The Kapil Sharma Show* has limitation in representing the reality of transgender persons. Instead, it tends to stereotype and objectify them for the sake of humor. The show features cisgender men dressed up as women and perform outrageous physical gags, reducing transgender people to mere means of humor. Such representation fails to acknowledge the diverse experiences, struggles, and identities of people belonging to this community. It undermines the reality of transgender individuals which results in misconception in the minds of audience.

The youth based, popular television reality show, *MTV Roadies* provides a platform for participants to showcase their talents without any discrimination. The current 19 seasons of the *MTV roadies* welcomed the transgender contestant, Neerja Punia who is a transwoman model and influencer (Breaking Barriers). This has broken the barrier and it establishes the benchmark of inclusivity by giving chance to transgender to set an example for other transgender. The show's inclusion of transgender participants is a positive step towards diversity of representation in the media. By featuring transgender individuals on the show, *MTV Roadies* breaks barriers of exclusion, and it challenges social taboos that exclude transgender persons (Roadies' Gets First Transgender Contestant). Such representation helps to humanize the transgender community and challenge stereotypes, highlighting their capabilities and contributions. It sends a powerful message that transgender individuals deserve equal opportunities and recognition in mainstream media and society. Hence, more television shows like *MTV Roadies*, are desirable for inclusive representation.

b) Misrepresentation of reality

The concept of misrepresentation denotes the wrong presentation of reality. Often, misrepresentation in the media takes place in the forms of racial and ethnic stereotypes, gender, and sexuality. The film *Laxmii* has been criticized for misrepresenting transgender individuals as they are inherently connected to supernatural evil (Dasgupta). There are concerns among the members of the LGBTQ community that Bollywood's long history has been insulting and vilifying Tran's people (Ray). In this film, Akshay Kumar, a Bollywood star, as cisgender male is wearing *Sari* and exaggeratedly portraying the transgender character. Instead of him, the Trans actor should have played the role of the transgender character. The character Akshay Kumar, with his huge, round, dark circle Bindi (basically worn by women on the forehead) on his forehead, and costume, plays the role of a transgender person (Chatterjee). In this way, the character does not represent the actual transgender person. This is a kind of misrepresentation. In one scene, Akshay Kumar is trying to wear a women's *Sari* in a shop in front of his family and everyone else. This scene makes fun of transgender people (Holland). As the film progresses, the situation becomes worse. In the climax of the film, a large number of transsexual people are dancing fervently in front of the statue of Lord Shiva as if they are possessed by some higher power. *Laxmii* herself continues with her vengeful business. Even after *Laxmii* commits murder (although she kills the wicked man), the audience cheers up as if they take pleasure in seeing the bloody scene (kumar).

The film *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* is different than other films in representing transgender persons. It goes out of the box, and it challenges the stereotype misrepresentation of transgender persons. It deviates from the trope of a man impersonating a Trans woman, which perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces societal biases. By casting a female protagonist to play the role of a transgender woman, the movie aims to provide a more accurate and respectful representation (Sundaram). When Maanvi reveals her transgender identity in front of Mannu, he gets angry and says *Mei Munde naal sex kita hai?* This means I had sex with a boy. Even his friends mock him by saying *Tune khud ki leli*, which means "You did it to yourself" (through this, they are trying to defame the third gender by mocking it). Even the sister of Mannu humiliates Maanvi by saying *Munjhal Niwas mei ek kinnar ayega bahu banker*, which means a transgender person will come to Munjal's residence disguised as a daughter-in-law (kumar and Sreenivas). Calling transgender people "kinnars" is often considered derogatory and disrespectful to them. This misrepresentation and unfavorable attitude

are provided in the film to highlight the awful impact that such misconceptions and prejudices may have on transgender people.

The television program, *The Kapil Sharma Show* also goes in line with the film *Laxmii* about the misrepresentation of transgender persons. This show portrays transgenders through comedic using derogatory language like *Sodium periodic table ka chakka* referring third gender as *Chakka* (a derogatory word used for transgender) which is disrespectful, and such language is used for unnecessary humor. The representation of such dialogue dehumanizes and trivializes the existence of transgender persons. This type of misrepresentation not only promotes the marginalization of transgender people but also reinforces harmful stereotypes in the minds of the audience. By reducing transgender individuals into punch lines and caricatures, the show reinforces societal biases, and it fails to provide a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences. (Ghose)

Contrary to *The Kapil Sharma Show*, the *MTV Roadies* aims to promote inclusivity of transgender persons, and to respect for diversity. *MTV Roadies* provides a platform for youth coming from different cultural, religious, and regional backgrounds. It also breaks the trends of stereotypical presentation by including LGBTQ people in the show raise their issues through the programme. Through this, participants from different walks of life can express their struggle and journey. In the show, contestants travel to different parts of India to experience different traditions, languages, and cultures. Thus, it is important to ensure that the representation is respectful, authentic, and free from stereotypes or exploitative narratives. Misrepresentation can occur when transgender individuals are sensationalized or depicted in a way that reinforces harmful stereotypes. It is crucial for the show to handle transgender representation responsibly, avoiding sensationalism and focusing on the participants' skills, achievements, and personal journeys.

2. LGBTQ youth and media perception

This research aimed to study about the perception of LGBTQ youth on the representation of transgender in the media. What thought process they go through when they see the characters playing roles or images, dresses depicting transgender persons in the mainstream media like film and television shows. In this regard, in-depth studies were carried out using questionnaire tool. The qualitative research focused primarily on three research questions: a) To what extend the characters playing the role as transgender persons in the films *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Ashique* do

justice to the identities of LGBTQ communities? b) Do the participation of transgender persons in the reality shows like *MTV Roadies* increase their acceptance and visibility in the mainstream society? c) Do the objectifying transgender for comic like cross dressing and punch lines, as depicted in the *Kapil Sharma Show*, harm the identity of LGBTQ?

a) Representation and question of justice

There is a close relationship between media representation and doing justice to the people or communities about whom media represents through their contents and the meaning they contain. This is more significant for visual media like films and television shows which tell stories through characters, dialogues, images, and the use of objects. All such means of representation signify meanings. Hence, they ought to signify true meaning and do justice. Films play an important role in narrativization, and they influence people's perceptions and build opinions on any issues. In this regard, this research focused on how the LGBTQ youth audience perceives the portrayals of transgender people in the films *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*. Both films have transgender as central characters, but both are represented in different ways.

On the question of whether these films have done justice to transgender persons while portraying them in the films, the respondents expressed that the representations were authentic. In their opinion, both films have taken a different approach, showcasing transgender individuals in a more empowering way. In *Laxmii*, transgender has been depicted as a motherly and strong personality. "Motherhood combined with the strong nature of women is a positive representation", they expressed. In *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, transgender persons have been portrayed as strong characters that stand up for their rights and strive for their recognition. The respondents considered these two films as good examples of the inclusion of transgender characters in mainstream cinema. Such representations are desirable for the development of positive images of transgender persons and the development of society. These films have challenged the patriarchal society through their authentic representation of transgender persons.

The films *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* also fall under the critique for their misrepresentation. The respondents expressed that both films have done injustice to the transgender persons while portraying through character. In *Laxmii* cisactor playing role of transgender while in *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* ciswomen playing role of transgender are stereotypical

representation. The Cisactor and ciswomen who are playing role of transgender lack in authentic representation. Hence, instead of cisactor, when transgender actor plays role, then the real-life reality and emotions of these people can be better portrayed. This kind of stereotypical representation creates misconception about transgender in the society. Comparing these two films, some respondents expressed that the *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* has tried to give better representation by portraying the new era of transgender (Chopra, 2021), while in *Laxmii*, transgender characters have denoted comic, funny, horrific and vengeful ghosts in the first half, and as vulnerable and marginalized individuals in the second half of the film.

b) Participation, visibility and acceptance

This research investigated *MTV Roadies* show to understand whether the participation of transgender persons in the reality show increase their visibility and acceptance in the society. It is important to know from LGBTQ youth perspective that the participation of transgender persons in the reality show really increase visibility and acceptance in the society. *MTV Roadies* television shows are the youth-based reality shows for which participants are selected on the basis of their talents. It has been seen that not only transgender, but LGBTQ people are the active participants in every season. Active participation in the show enhances visibility and inclusion of transgender persons in the society.

The findings shows that 60 percent of respondents expressed that the involvement of transgender individuals in reality shows, like *MTV Roadies*, potentially enhances their acceptance and visibility in mainstream society. This show has a wider viewership, and it is most popular among youth population. A huge number of youth populations follow it, but they need to participate more then only society will accept them. Obviously through this show people will get to know about transgender people more closely. It is significant that when transgender participants are featured on popular reality shows, their real-life experiences, perspectives, and issues are communicated to a larger audience. The exposure in the reality show gives an opportunity to express them, which helps better understanding of transgender people and it develops empathy towards this community. When transgender people participate in the show, they need to be emotionally strong and have a lot of support from the audience, which they do not get since there is always a segregated space for transgender individuals. So, viewing this show also has a positive impact on the mind. Additionally, by showcasing transgender participants with diverse talents, skills, and personalities, these shows play a vital role in breaking stereotypes and by

doing that, it challenges misconceptions about transgender individuals.

However, 30 percent of respondents have expressed that this kind of show focuses more on gaining popularity, and not on the service of transgender communities. Such shows use transgender participants as a TRP stunt, and they try to grab emotional sympathy from the audience. By grabbing the emotional sympathy of transgender participants, the shows earn their popularity. It is extra TRP that they earn from the audience's sentiments. While 10 percent of respondents expressed that they were not sure about *MTV Roadies* increasing visibility of the transgender people in society.

c) Portrayal of transgender for humour

Objectifying transgender for comics like cross-dressing and punch lines used for transgender people do harm to the identity of this section people (Ghose). The representation of transgender with derogative language, and punch lines develops misconceptions in society. This type of misrepresentation not only promotes the marginalization of transgender people but also reinforces harmful stereotypes in the minds of the audience. Therefore, this research investigated the LGBTQ youth and whether comic-like cross-dressing and punch lines as represented in *The Kapil Sharma Show*, harm the identity of transgender persons. *The Kapil Sharma Show* is a big family comedy show which has huge popularity in society.

The findings show that 70 percent of respondents do not have an appreciation for cross-dressing in the *Kapil Sharma Show*. They expressed that the comic and fun not be continued anymore in the show, and also audience should not appreciate this kind of joke like *sodium periodic table ka chakka*. Here, *chakka* is a colloquial word used for transgender; it is used for humor by comparing it with sodium in the periodic table to make fun of it. There is no point in men wearing women's clothes and making jokes and bashing them by saying *saram nhi ata mard hokar aurat ke kapre pahenti hai* which means "Don't you feel shame being a man and wearing women's clothes". This mainly defames the identity of transgender. This kind of fun and jokes create bad images, and they distort the identities of transgender persons. Such portrayals perpetuate harmful stereotypes, reinforce discrimination, and add to the marginalization of the transgender community. Using transgender individuals for humor in a disrespectful manner is harmful.

Contrary to this, 30 percent of respondents expressed that they were fine with such representation. According to them, portrayals with comics and

jokes do not harm their identity. But it provides visibility of the transgender community in the society. They opined that the show is not meant for educational purposes. It is normal. When representation is in comedy form, the audience is more likely to accept it. "Sometimes it is good because the show is showing our community on the big platform", the respondents said.

3. Transphobia

The research investigated LGBTQ youth whether the negative portrayals of transgender persons in the selected films: *Laxmii*, *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, and the television shows *Kapil Sharma Show* and *MTV Roadies* spread transphobia (unfavorable responses or perspectives on transgender persons) in mainstream society. As mentioned, *Laxmii* makes fun of transgender; *Kapil Sharma's show* has a horrific representation of cross-dressing. This kind of representation in the films can cultivate negative perceptions about the transgender community.

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As the finding shows, the respondents have mixed reactions when asked about the negative portrayals of transgender persons. Fifty percent of respondents believe that films have been portraying transgender as kidnapppers. For instance, in the film *Sangharsh*, a transwoman played by Ashutosh Rana abducts and sacrifices infants for religious fanatics that because they think it will help them achieve good fortune that has made childhood haunting. Even in the film *Sadak* and *Rajjo* have shown trans people in bad light. In today's era, children learn and cultivate perception as films portray about the transgender. Films like *Masti*, *Partner*, and *Kya Super Cool Hain Hum* used trans characters as fun and laughing objects (Ahuja). Therefore, representation in films and television shows matters in society. A film like *Dostanna* makes a mockery of the gay community, *Laxmii* makes fun of transgender, and *Kapil Sharma's shows* create a horrific representation of cross-dressing. Even a serial like *Shakti- Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki* which was aired in the year 2016 with a pleasant message on

transgender. However, it quickly lost control of the storyline, extending the story over four years and falling to the traditional serial concept. Not only did the narrative contain a character who was unaware that she was transgender, but it also had a hate-fueled, extremely transgender plot that didn't sit right well.

Contrary to this, fifty percent of respondents opined by saying that "it is all about the mindset how we want to take it as the portrayal of transgender individuals in TV shows and films." They don't agree with the hypothesis that portrayals of transgender persons in films and television shows spread transphobia in mainstream society. Instead, they expressed that the films and television shows represent transgender person positive ways, showcasing the characters as strong, capable, and resilient individuals. The media representation has the potential to empower the transgender community and challenge negative stereotypes. Positive depiction plays a crucial role in countering harmful narratives and fostering for more inclusive and understanding society. In the recent film *Gangubai Kathiawad* there was the role of Rajhiyabai who was transgender even after losing the election from Gangubai. They showed her cheering the Gangubai. They ended up on a very positive note. Aside from them, numerous trans characters have been expertly depicted on-screen by outstanding performers. Kubra Sait in the *Holy Sports*, Ashutosh Rana in *Sangharsh*, and Sadashiv Amrapurkar in *Sadak* are for example. They did a fabulous job in portraying the trans character in the film.

4. Construction of positive identities

The media play an important role in spreading and communicating information in society. Instead of spreading transphobia, transgender people need to be given positive visibility in mainstream media. Therefore, this research investigated on media can construct a positive perception of transgender people. As mentioned, the film *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* creates a positive and real image of transgender people; the TV show *MTV Roadies* provides opportunities for transgender persons to participate in the show. This kind of representation in the films positively influences people's perceptions of transgender persons.

Cismen and ciswomen play the transgender character in *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* which unjustly allows them to simply pretend to know and comprehend the struggles of transgender individuals. The respondents suggested that transgender people should play the transgender role instead of men playing the role of trans women, which is depicted in the

film *Laxmii*. This type of depiction is a stereotype. Similarly, in the film *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, transwomen are not playing the role of women.

The respondents opined that the *Kapil Sharma show* portrays transgender more positively, instead of using it as cross-dressing and making it fun. The visual media should function to educate people. The respondents suggested that the producers should approach transgender persons, especially those who are role models, to get opinions for the scheme of production. The television show should depict the daily lifestyle and the struggles of transgender persons so that other people can feel one with their lived reality. Such positive representation in the media will develop sympathy and acceptance of the transgender community in the larger society. This kind of small step can help create a better place for them.

The *MTV Roadies show* give visibility to transgender people, as Neer-ja transwomen contestant in the show doing all the stunts and faces all the challenges in the show with full courage and spirit. The respondents have an appreciation for making transgender visibility. However, they expressed that this much visibility in the show is not enough, the media should provide them with more opportunities in advertisement, film, reality shows, radio jockeys, comedy shows, educational announcements, and such other forms of visual communication. Other people should see that this community is not hostile anyway. Transgender persons also are human like other fellow beings. They also want to live a good life and contribute to society. The role of media is to advocate for people that people also are contributors to nation-building while doing jobs like doctors, lawyers, and engineers. In this regard, the media should also show the modern version of the transgender not only the traditional version as portrayed in *Laxmii*.

In order to construction of positive identity of transgender persons, the respondents suggested that the visual media, like television shows and films, should create well-rounded characters with relatable emotions, aspirations, and vulnerabilities. They should introduce transgender characters in various roles and genres, avoiding token representation, humors, and ensure that it doesn't belittle or demean transgender characters.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research explored the representation of transgender individuals in Bollywood films and popular TV shows, revealing a nuanced landscape of both realistic and stereotypical portrayals. The analysis of *Laxmii* demon-

strates an attempt to depict transgender experiences authentically, but it also perpetuates negative stereotypes by linking transgender characters to supernatural evil. In contrast, *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* offers a relatively authentic portrayal, though it includes some derogatory terms, underscoring a mixed approach to representation. Television shows like *The Kapil Sharma Show* often reduce transgender individuals to objects of comedy through exaggerated portrayals, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Conversely, *MTV Roadies* aims to promote inclusivity by providing a platform for transgender individuals to showcase their talents, yet concerns about the underlying motives and ethical implications of such inclusion remain.

The insights gathered from LGBTQ youth regarding media portrayals reveal both advancements and ongoing challenges. While *Laxmii* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* offer a combination of realistic and clichéd depictions, there is a clear need for media to prioritize truthful and empathetic portrayals, avoiding harmful stereotypes. The inclusion of transgender individuals in reality programs like *MTV Roadies* is seen as a positive development for visibility and acceptance, but ethical concerns about tokenism and exploitation must be addressed to ensure genuine representation. Comedy programs like *The Kapil Sharma Show* have been criticized for reinforcing stereotypes and marginalizing transgender identities, highlighting the importance of responsible content creation. The potential influence of negative media portrayals on public perception suggests that while such representations may contribute to transphobia, well-executed portrayals could positively impact the transgender community.

Future research should aim to validate these preliminary findings by exploring larger and more diverse samples, conducting longitudinal studies, and comparing representations across different cultural contexts. To build positive identities for transgender individuals, media must focus on authentic casting, multidimensional character development, and a balanced portrayal that avoids tokenism. Enhancing media practices and addressing ethical concerns will be crucial for fostering a more inclusive and respectful representation of transgender individuals.

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