

Stereotypes and Stigmas in the News: A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on
Khawajasiras in Pakistan's Newspapers

By

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the stereotypical and stigmatizing discourses regarding a non-binary gendered marginalized group in Pakistan, called Khawajasiras. Since 2009, after Supreme Court's verdict in favor of Khawajasiras, a number of developments have taken place for the welfare of the community. However, literature shows that these developments have had limited impact on the marginalized lives of Khawajasiras. Therefore, this study raises the question of if and how stereotypes and stigmas are reinforced regarding the Khawajasira community despite the post 2009 developments for the community's welfare. The question is addressed by doing critical discourse analysis of Pakistan's newspapers.

The study applies Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis and combines it with path dependency theory, Goffman's theorization of stigmatization of the non-normative for upholding a normative social order, Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, and Delphy's work on discourses of gender binaries. Using primary data of news reports on Khawajasiras from 2009 to 2017, collected by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the study thematically analyzes the stereotypes and stigmas on Khawajasiras in the newspapers' discourse in Pakistan.

The analysis shows that the increasing visibility of Khawajasiras in the news discourses, underscored by their victimized and marginalized status, is a critical move away from the colonial stereotypes and stigmas regarding the community. However, evidence from the news texts also shows that the state driven 'mainstreaming' discourse appears to discipline the non-normative lives to uphold a normative social order which resultantly, entrenches Khawajasiras

into a multi-layered trap of stereotypes and stigmas. These stereotypes and stigmas not only show continuation of some crucial elements of the colonial discourses on the community, but also highlights the ongoing gendering of Khawajasiras into a gender binary driven notion of femininity. The theoretical and practical implications of the analysis are discussed in the dissertation.

Keywords: Khawajasira, Transgender of Pakistan, Critical Discourse Analysis, Stereotypes, Stigmas.