

Male Bodies, Women's Souls: Personal Narratives of Beauty Salons Workers in Pakistan

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Abstract

The current study is conducted in Lahore, Pakistan. Through this study, an effort has been made for analyzing the relationship between embodiment, subjectivity, and labour activity involving beauty salons workers. To comprehend the objective of the study, researchers have selected thirteen respondents through purposive and networking sampling technique, and informal interview/ discussion method has been used as a tool for the collection of data. It observed that bodies have a role to play in the power relations and in the various discourses producing the abnormal and normal bodies in the society, leading to establishing the intelligibility of the body by the gender categories. For producing one's subjectivity, the body also has an active role to play. The intelligibility of the binary gender matrix considers transgender people abnormal, making them prone to be discriminated against, socially excluded and stigmatized. Considering the labour opportunities, the observation is that the physical bodies of these people (working in beauty salons) create obstacles for attaining any formal jobs and position in the family and society. Therefore, for their survival, they choose such professions which provide the space for the subjective interpretation of their body.

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Introduction

The study of the human body has always been the subject matter of anthropology and other social sciences. Mainly the early monographs in anthropology were based predominately on stance derived from the interest of male ethnographers. As far as the studies of women or gender are concerned, that was generally the part of kinship and family chapters. The study of gender as a subject matter gained its significance with the contributions of pioneers such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret. The body as a topic was always included in theories that considered organizations as entities since the beginning of the systematization of anthropology. (Barry and Peter, 2002).

'Western' fairy tale depiction of the binary system of gender excluding third (or multiple) gender roles is in stark contrast to the gender complexities within South Asian thought, practice, and even in myth.

South Asian mythology depicts the frequent presence of androgynous, transvestite, transgendered, and bisexual figures. Hence, preparing room for the creation and endorsement of a conceptual space that translates in social terms into the enablement of the discontinuity between the culturally and socially constructed genders and the sexed bodies (Agrawal, 1997). The institution of Hijra is a pragmatic example of this gender fluidity where those who were hermaphrodite, impotent, infertile (if female) had undergone an operation to determine their social and ritual identity (Doniger, 1999).

Frederick Taylor regarded the human body as a prime subject for the analysis, considering his time and motion concept and the assembly line by Henry Ford as they aspired to ameliorate control as a source to increase production. Parker (2000) also pointed at Fordism as systematic manipulation for the human muscles. Besides this, when studied from the perspectives of Human Relations, similarities can also be drawn. For instance, because there is a classification between mind and body that illustrates forms of managing the production of the body through controlling the worker's minds. This was done by managing the informal groups to which the workers belonged (McDowell & Court, 1994).

Organizations objectify bodies (Acker, 1990; Hetrick & Boje, 1992; Hollidat & Thompson, 2001); hence many researchers have endeavoured to understand this objectification by considering the body to be inert and a passive object in terms of the power relations. The source of categorization between mind and body goes back to the classical Cartesian division, which posits the body to be a passive object which is under the influence of social forces. As per this approach, the body cannot be considered as an agent who can stand against the standardization and objectification as well as to actively take part in the formulation of subjectivities (Thanem, 2011).

According to Burrell and Dale (2000), the restructuring of bodies and claim that the body projected self-image can be distorted and recreated. The body is considered as an extension of self in contrast to the previous conception that it is only an organic system comprised of interrelated parts. Brewis and Sinclair (2000) also state that the perception of an individual about themselves and their subjectivity is greatly linked with the relationships which they form with their bodies (Grosz, 2018).

That is why comprehensible or accessible sex is "one whose role is to run institute and to continue the coherence in sex, sexual requirements and intimate practices. (Butler, 1990). For Butler, the chief upshot of comprehensible genders was to head the barring of any type of unclear or unintelligible expression, finding to set up a well-defined link between one's cultural and biological genders

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or sex, hence developing the natural relation among the gender identity and genitals (Schilt & Connell, 2007). Another meaning is that the power relation makes and control the gendered anatomy digressively (Thanem, 2011). Anatomies that are not stuck to or disarray the intelligibility gets subjected to be servile (Thanem, 2003; Adelman & Ruggi, 2008). Therefore, out of the matrix of intelligibility.

doesn't exist"

On account of a frequent piece of norms, the intertextuality still finds away from the main identity, as due to the present execution linked to the identity can postulate citation or aim towards the imagined state which in reality do not exist (Kenny & Euchler, 2012).

It can be said that the performance or execution is the speculation, and that is why all execution shows the eventuality of gender identity and the possibility of the alteration and abolition contained in such (De Souza, Brewis & Rumens, 2016). The performance is not a mimetic re-enactment recapitulation is not so stable, and there is the potential of the abolition of subversion, which generates the gender trouble. In this way, the binarism masculine versus feminine cannot refract the fluidity that characterizes the embodied experience of gender (Linstead & Pullen, 2006).

Gender is not like something which cannot be changed; instead, it is always a constant process of becoming as well as it is also heterogeneous and multiple. Gender fluidity is beyond the movement of a binary or a horizontal boundary among the multiple identities. The identity is referred to as fluidity and motion. It tends to dissolve the boundaries, and the flood takes them off. Such as, Connell (2010) explains that the humans like transgender have entailed the potential and capabilities of doing (strengthening characteristics that are linked to masculinity or femininity), undoing (disordering the gender polarization), and redoing (the resetting characteristic linked to masculinity or femininity) the genders, simultaneously. On this account, Thanem (2011) argues that travesties' performance of gender is somehow can differ as they execute it without specifying to be permanently feminine or masculine. Hence, they not only interrupt the dual-gender system but also undo the very gender (Thanem & Knights, 2012). Connell (2010) also states even though transgender people being involved relevantly in this process of remodelling the gender but their possibilities of finding a formal workplace where they have job security and can keep friendly relationships, in addition to considering the struggle of undoing the gender are still very limited (Schilt & Connell, 2007).

Excluding all the above-enlisted gender types, there is another type of individuals who have fully male-like anatomy, wear clothes like male but act like females, the type normally found in the beauty salons for females. Through this study, it has been tried to know more about these people; why they act like females and give their subjective meaning to their body.

Objectives

To unearth the body's role and the process of the embodiment process in the subjectivity construction of self of individuals working at beauty salons

Material and Methods

The current research has been developed through the qualitative method of Denzin and Lincoln (2003). It was utilized based on the possibility of constructing intelligibility's theoretical model. Studies that are aimed at variable or constructs which cannot be accessed directly or in the processor in control are mainly studied through qualitative research methods.

In addressing the objective of the study, the researcher has used an informal interview and observation method as data collection tools. The unit of analysis in the present study was those individuals who have a complete male body, but they behave like females (communicate like female during their working hours) and are working in lady's beauty salons. A sample of thirteen respondents was selected through purposive and networking sampling techniques. This method is employed throughout the research process, keeping in the notice the indication and needs emerging from research. All the interviews were conducted in the Urdu language and were translated into English for analysis purpose.

Results and Discussions

The body has an important place considering the process of subjectification and the construction of subjectivities and identities (Adelman & Ruggi, 2008). However, the process of recognizing oneself as feminine or masculine regards the process of gender embodiment process (Connell, 2013). Therefore, it points at femininity and masculinity operating as the labels involving power relations. It also points towards the attribution of human beings to behave and act in a certain way and providing them with the confined spaces of delimiting and occupying gender possibilities. Performativity is the process that led to undoing and doing gender through the repetitive discursive norm. On the other hand, the logical presentation of the discursive norms tends to produce the intelligibility in the genders (Butler, 2004).

The prior review suggests that the body has an important place considering the process of subjectification and the construction of subjectivities and identities Both transsexuals and transgender experiences subjective along with social distress linked to their physical bodies (McClintock, 2013). The review also suggests that the majority of transgender individuals are forcefully made to work on the streets as prostitutes disregarding their social protection (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). Moreover, there is another group of individuals who have male body organs, but they are not male actually. So, they have to give subjective explanations of their bodies. For instance, one of the respondents said.

"From my childhood, I wanted to behave like females. I want to dress up like them, behave like them, perform like them, but it was quite difficult for me to remove my genitalia because if I do, so I have to lose all my bonds. I have to lose my family, friends and everything.

As you know, those able to manage to keep the family bonds, in cases if their family shows acceptance for it, turns out as completely different individuals."

Another respondent said that.

"Being a male is considered as honour in our society, and you must have seen many cases that females have become males after the operation. They are equally respected, but if a male wants to become a female after the operation, there will be no space for him. I want to become a female, but due to social pressure, it's quite impossible for me, but I could not perform any male-centred job. Therefore, I have adopted this profession."

Another respondent said that;

"If I would be not working here, then I must be working as a prostitute like other transgender, which is not acceptable for my family and definitely, I have to cut off. Therefore, I think beauty salon is proper places for the individuals like me who have are bound to follow the social as well as family norms and also want to satisfy themselves."

Another respondent narrated as;

"At an early age, I have suffered a lot due to my body because I am not what my body says. I can't do what I want to do due to social pressure. Therefore, I have adopted this profession, and I think it's a minimum level of satisfaction, but it's much better to behave or act like a male."

Furthermore, one of the respondents said that;

"I think it is the most stressful situation when you could not see yourself as you wish. I am fighting with myself because I am a female, but my body is like a male, and I can't change it. Therefore, I try my level of best to satisfy myself as well as make space in the family and society."

It has become evident through data that except the binary gender categories and transgender, some individuals look like males, but they don't behave and identify themselves as male. They behave like females and also prefer to become female, but due to societal and family pressure, they are unable to change their gender. They always feel a contradiction between their bodies and roles. They try to adopt such a profession where they give their subjective interpretation of their bodies for their acceptability in society. Therefore, the body of an individual is not enough to determine one's gender.

Early childhood socialization environment also influences one's adaptation of gender roles and behaviour, and it might become his/her ideal lifetime role. For example, one of the respondents said that;

"I am the only son of my parents, and I have five sisters. I always love to work with my mother and sisters in the house, but when I met my male fellows or friends in school, I don't feel comfortable with them. After getting mature, I always feel misfit with my body and the role assigned to me as a male. Therefore, I have joined this profession where I can work as well as behave like a female, and I feel very satisfied here."

The socialization environment has some serious impact on the development of gender identity. It was observed those male children who spend their maximum time with females, either with their sisters or other females, have a chance to adopt the feminine role and have a tendency to behave like females. In their later life, they wished to become female or give a subjective interpretation of their bodies and identify themselves as a female.

Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that one's gender is determined by his or her action and behaviour. Gender is not something that is determined through someone's body. Furthermore, it was concluded that sexuality compared to gender is the major constitutive aspect of identities and also direct the individual to behave like male or female. Indeed, gender is neither historical nor transcendental, and gender has nothing to do with something that someone has nor something that someone is. Gender is something that someone does and undoes and not the property of individuals.

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