

# **The social struggle of being HIJRA in Bangladesh**

- cultural aspiration between inclusion and illegitimacy

**“Actress at the top and actor at the bottom”**

- One hijra about the sex-gender alignment



**Tove Stenqvist**

**Communication for Development**

**One-year master, 15 credits**

**Malmö University**

**Supervisor: Oscar Hemer**

**Spring 2015**

**Submission date: 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2015**

## Acknowledgements

The interest in matters concerning sexual minorities around the world preceded the choice of topic for this thesis. It is with passion for the issues of gender dynamics, the right to self-identification and with hope for less discriminatory structures all around that this thesis came into writing.

More time and effort should rightfully have been given to this project, with respect to the people it concerns. Unfortunately, due to time and space constraints, the research needed to come to an end. Nevertheless, it is with pride that I announce that this research has been finalized, and it is done so with a promise for future elaboration within another setting of theoretical research or other practical efforts.

Furthermore, I would like to declare my gratitude to the staff connected to the Master's programme in Communication for Development, and my fellow students for a couple of years of interesting discussions and cooperation.

Last but not least, I would like to send out my gratitude to my partner in life, Vernon Vrolijk, and to my family and friends for the support in all my endeavors.

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## Abstract

*The hijra subculture in Bangladesh remains one of the most marginalized and violated minority groups in Bangladesh. However, with recent legislative change in Bangladesh, the group has gained legal recognition in that a third official gender has been introduced. The people that conform to the third gender are now allowed to, in any formal and official documents within the nation, list hijra as their gender.*

*This thesis investigates the media representation of the hijra movement's struggle before, and after the legislative change. To serve this end, the productions of three leading English speaking media platforms have been analyzed. The aim is to further increase the understanding of the representation and visibility of the hijra rights movement, and the hijra situation in the public sphere of media. Subsequently, the study concerns the normative structures in Bangladesh, and how media as a communicative tool can focus the audience's attention, whilst adding to these structures or challenging them. The context of culture, media as a tool for communication, and the functions of social constructivism constitute the foundation for the analysis. The investigation consists mainly of a textual discourse analysis of chosen articles from the three different media platforms.*

## **Abbreviations**

CERD- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

HASAB- HIV/Aids and STD Alliance Bangladesh

ICCPR- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

LGBT- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

NGO- Non-governmental Organization

NID- National Identification Card

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

The importance of this study lies in one of the most fundamental human values; being a free individual. People nowadays are still being discriminated based on their gender identity or even their perceived gender identity around the world. It is therefore highly relevant to outline the struggle of the most marginalized group in one of the poorest countries in the world, whose ‘crime’ is to not conform to the traditional social norms about gender in their society.

“...gender is not sane. It's not sane to call a rainbow black and white.” -Kate Bornstein

It is not easy to define the phenomenon of hijra, as the concept is constituted by both cultural- and also individual identity traits. What the word hijra means for you and I, might not be the reality of how hijras on the Indian subcontinent perceive themselves. The hijra concept has also been deeply anchored in the history of the South Asian culture and has been developing until present day. Furthermore, a recent development in Bangladesh dictates new terms for the transgender hijra population, as a new legislative turn has been made which recognizes hijra as Bangladesh's third gender. This entails that all official documents will now include the more or less accurate term of hijra, for those people that conform to it. This thesis will be an attempt to highlight the struggle of the hijra rights movement, and the hijra community surrounding the recent official recognition. This is done by identifying the visibility of the hijra rights movement and the community it is trying to protect. Additionally, its analysis will involve how this movement has been publicly represented on three different media platforms, and what aspirations are visible in this representation.

Throughout time there have been severe changes in the conceptions and role of hijras in the Bangladeshi society. The hijra community has been, and arguable by most, still is one of the most marginalized groups in the Bangladeshi society. Despite this, the hijra rights movement has been able to endure. The standpoint for this thesis is that due to the legislative change; the struggle is allowed to take a different shape, where the outcome is shown in the dynamics of legal structures, politics, culture and social norms. This approach will further allow me to identify the aspirations of the hijra movement, and to determine whether or not there has been an increased capacity in achieving these.

This written effort will first introduce the historical and cultural context of hijra in Bangladesh, with the aim of gaining understanding of the phenomenon itself and the difficulties hijras are facing today. Subsequently, the thesis will present the more current context of transgenderism in South Asia and Bangladesh today, together with legal, political and social norm structures that are available in the society. Thereafter the presentation of this thesis's theoretical and methodological structure will be provided together with the design of the study. This will be followed by the execution of the analysis in three different steps. The last chapters function as the roundup of the paper, where the aim is for the research findings, the literature and theories to all come together.

### 1.1 Aim & Objectives

That “communication lies in the heart of sociality” (Schech & Haggis 2000, p. 196), I think we all can agree upon. It is through the communications between people where interconnectedness is created, but more importantly; it is also through communication that identities and communities can be formed. The way we communicate with one another has an impact on values and knowledge that



represents current social interaction (Schech & Haggis 2000, p. 196). The hijra movement in Bangladesh is a movement that is based on interconnectedness. This interconnectedness has created a community within the Bangladeshi society that is both culturally and historically accepted; whilst at the same time being a discriminated minority outside of most functions within the society. With the legislative change in mind where hijra is acknowledged as a third gender in Bangladesh, this study will focus on the media representation of this movement both before and after the legislative change in Bangladesh.

In today's digital world, the word society can mean many things and is not necessarily confined within the national borders (Couldry 2012, p. 1). In the sense of this thesis, the word society is mostly referred to as the Bangladeshi society; within which the relevant media platforms are functioning.

Media is shaping societies in that it is a part where knowledge, opinions, culture and more is communicated. The interest of this study lies within the media's shaping of a public discourse. Where media's hidden influence ought to be positive and where the social discourses in the case of the hijra status in the Bangladeshi society can transcend into a normative discourse of change (Couldry 2012, p. 99).

This study aims to identify the media representation, and the visibility of the hijra rights movement in Bangladesh. In general terms, the timeframe will constitute the years before and after the recent legislative change where hijra has become recognized as the official third gender, and will furthermore be determined by the chosen texts available for the study. Additionally, the study aims to lay out and identify the aspirations of the hijra rights movement as seen from the media point of view, and determine whether or not the capacity to achieve these have increased. The research questions are as following.

### **1.1.1 Research questions**

- How visible have the hijra community and its rights movement been in the online news media of Bangladesh?
- What kind of media representation has presented the struggle before and after the legislative change?
- How are the aspirations of the third gender hijra in Bangladesh represented in online news media and has the capacity to achieve these increased over time?

## **Chapter 2 – Background**

In order to further understand the context in which hijras live, one need to understand the normative part of the active society. This makes the social culture of Bangladesh and of South Asia in this section highly relevant, because; culture takes on the role of being a socially established structure of the interpreted meanings of the individuals within (Reckwitz 2002, p. 245). The importance of normative structures in this research is the outcome of it. We need to take an objective step out of the normative structures in order to find out what it means to be considered as breaking the norms of a particular society. We also need to be aware of how the struggle looks like, in order to determine a change in social culture or of cultural norms where the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting are voicing their aspiration for legal, political and social recognition. The

upcoming sections will assist in gaining further understanding of the structures the hijra rights movement acts within in order to safeguard the rights of the hijra community.

## 2.1 Hijra in the South Asian culture

The complexity of understanding the hijrahood in South Asia is derived from the fact that it has become the icon for sex/gender non-conformism in the region. The narrative tradition of hijrahood includes both Hinduism and Islam creatively, although many argue that hijra has shown a special bias towards Islam. Both in past tense and also in recent times that association is connected to the most defining ritual of hijrahood; which is emasculation (Hossain 2012, p. 495). South Asia has in this way specifically become closely associated with one particular discourse of gender and also sexual pluralism, which is represented in the studies of the emerging hijras. Historically and culturally this particular gender icon has emerged out of contexts, such as specific colonial and also post-colonial social processes. Previous scholarship regarding sexuality in colonized Asia proves that Western imperialism had an impact on sexual practices in South Asia. In turn this resulted in a new order in gender norms, and a de-legitimization and more often than not criminalization, of what was recently seen as tolerated sexual practices (Loos 2009, p. 1314-15). The colonial state was for example pre-disposed to separate hindu-hijra from muslim-hijra, even though the state recognized that they were alike in all respects (Lal 1999, p. 122).

When investigating the hijra role in the South Asian culture to the colonial era, it is obvious that this is where the myth meets the reality. It is more or less obvious that hijras were deemed to be excluded from the authorized Western notions of heteronormativity, where local variations were delegitimized (Loos 2009, p. 1315). Therefore, it is arguable that this is where the struggle of the hijra started; a struggle that would still continue to this day.

To be able to understand the becoming of the hijra and the assimilation of the phenomenon into our worldview, the standpoint in this research needed to be derived from a factual and literary standpoint, and not from mythology (Lal 1999, p. 121-122). Therefore in this research, hijras and their current societal role and the journey to where they are today, needs to be understood from the cultural knowledge of politics of our time. There is a possibility that this assimilation is what has caused hijra such a separate identification method. Ever since the colonial times in South Asia, hijras have sought the possibility to use a self-identification method that clearly exceeds what was, in the west, seen as radical forms of self-representation. With this in mind, the most relevant question in order to experience the reality is: *"Just who are the hijras?"* (Lal 1999, p. 121).

There have been several attempts to categorize hijra in the South Asian culture. The word hijra itself stems from the Urdu language, and has no English equivalence. A person who considers themselves as hijra could be described as either 'eunuch' or 'hermaphrodite' (intersex), an emasculated male whose genitals are male-like at birth but would be re-categorized as intersex or hijra (Nanda 1999, p. xix-xxi). Importantly, defining hijra is as difficult for the South Asian societies as for the hijras themselves; the reason being that it both concerns a person's sexual identity, as well as that person's gender identity. Some mainstream attempts to define the concept of hijra are the following:

- Hijras are male to their biological sex, but have refused their masculine identity to identify themselves as women or as 'not men'. Hijras usually identify as 'not men' and prefer to have sex with men, and they are commonly perceived as homosexuals by the rest of the society (Chakrapani 2010).

- Hijras are intersexed at birth and can therefore live as either men or women. Although a hijra could also be a man at birth that has undergone emasculation or whom wishes to undergo emasculation. The goal is to live as a woman or as a 'not man' (Hahm 2010).

- Hijra is a proverbial third sex and/or gender in South Asia, and is a subculture of feminine-identified male-bodied person who desire men (Hossain 2012, p. 495).

Considering the difficulties and the many explanations of what the term hijra actually means, this research will settle with a more generalized explanation: *the hijra community in Bangladesh does not conform to the conventional notions of what is a male or female gender, but choose to instead combine the two mainstream gender forms or instead move between those two* (Islam Khan 2009, p. 442-3). In this way, the hijra community has socially created a third gender including a highly individual gender and/or sexual identity.

## 2.2 The spiritual life of Hijra

There has at some point in history, been a clear distinction between Hinduism and Islam in a hijra's personal life. It has been stated that the religious role of the hijras is derived from Hinduism, but the historical role is derived from the eunuchs in the Muslim courts. However, it is said that this distinction has now ceased to exist among the hijras themselves, although outsiders might still want to draw on this distinction. It has been said to be common that "Hindu hijras" speak of becoming Muslim, although it is- and for long has been, the Hindu goddess Bahuchara Mata that is mostly connected to hijra practices (Lal 1999, p. 122).

The difficulty with determining Islam's standpoint on the issue stems from its paradoxical values. On the one hand, the Prophet Muhammad despises castration and considers castrated men as non-Muslims. The prophet also denied cross-dressers entry into his home. Moreover, homosexuality and abstinence from marriage is also forbidden (Hahm 2010, p. 12). On the other hand, due to the inability of eunuchs to reproduce, this supposedly had a great impact of the perceived honesty of that person. Based on this, the eunuch often received honorable positions as guards of mosque treasures and of the women visiting the mosques (Reddy 2005, p. 24). This occupation of eunuchs started from the site of the Prophet Muhammad's tomb in Medina, and moved on to the site of the symbolic center of Islam in Mecca. Eunuchs are still found at both sites (Hahm 2010, p. 12-13).

Where many societal, cultural or religious structures feel uncomfortable or even bans in-between gender categories, such as transvestitism, homosexuality, hermaphroditism and transgenderism and even makes attempts to dissolve them. Hinduism on the other hand, views the diversity as highly meaningful and powerful (Nanda 1999, p. 20). The Hindu mythology has also, with their characters, been supporting the hijra identity; as these incorporate stories of many androgynies undergoing sex changes. Although as with most stories, these are subject to interpretation, nevertheless the more obvious support from Hindu mythology stems from the God Ram who acknowledged and blessed intersexed (Hahm 2010, p. 11).

As emasculation is a source of ritual power for the hijras, it is this particular practice that highly links hijra to Shiva (Nanda 1999, p. 24). In this way, Ascetics appear throughout the Hindu mythology where Shiva is recognized as the most creative one (Nanda, 1999, p. 30). It is also the emasculation

in the footsteps of Shiva, or the Shiva reunion with the Mother Goddess, which sanctions hijra's role as performers in foremost weddings and at birth ceremonies (Nanda 1999, p. 24).

### **2.3 Being transgender in the Bangladeshi society**

The Bangladeshi society remains a conservative society where traditional values, relationship to the rest of the family, social circle and social expectations form an individual. Therefore, emancipation of individual traits is almost impossible. Additionally, concepts such as shame and honor play an important role in all contexts above and social obligations in order to protect the family's honor also include gender performance. In other words, someone that is perceived by the masses as a traditional male should act in a manly manner in order to not bring shame on the rest of the family (Bondyopadhyay & Ahmed 2010, p. 22-23). The stigma of being a hijra in the Bangladeshi society starts within the family constellation. It has been shown that the reason many hijras seek a life outside of the normative constellations, is to protect their families from further societal stigmatization. This has proven to be more visible as siblings enter into the institution of marriage, where the one sibling whom does not get married is then perceived as conspicuous (Nanda 1999, p. 116). With this said, every culture has different expectations for individuals at different ages. The predominant norms present in the Bangladeshi society have more or less always forced the hijras to give up their families, as discrimination and abuse are common factors in an adolescent hijra's life. In some instances, feminine males are often considered as creating societal problems starting from a damaged reputation of the family (Islam Khan et al. 2009, p. 444).

Historically, there has been a disconnect present between gay individuals and the hijra community in Bangladesh, which is due to class, educational status, social standing, the language being used and visibility. However this disconnect has diminished recently, giving sexual minority communities a stronger foundation, which in turn create more hope (Bondyopadhyay & Ahmed 2010, p. 23).

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the hijra community has been the sexual minority group that has been more socially marginalized than any other group in Bangladesh. Recent research has shown that members of the mainstream Bangladeshi society have refused to develop any social relation with someone included in the hijra community. The hijra have also long been excluded from accessing social institutions and social services, such as schooling, housing and basic health care services. In addition to the social discrimination, members of the hijra community are also facing daily accounts of domination, acts of violence and abuse from other Bangladeshi citizens not accepting their existence (Khan et al. 2009, p. 448). Gross human rights violations have often been reported by civil society movements lobbying for the rights of the hijra community. Violations occur in forms of abduction, arbitrary arrests, detention, beatings and gang rape by law enforcement agencies and others. There have also been reports of molestation, both on physical and psychological levels, of people with non-heteronormative gender expressions and attributes. Left with very few options, many hijras turn to occupation within prostitution and drugs (Sexual Rights Initiative 2009, p. 4).

## 2.4 Legal structures in Bangladesh

The legal structures of Bangladesh are paradoxical when it comes to discrimination based on the belonging to a particular social group in Bangladesh. On the one hand, Bangladesh has ratified several international conventions in protection of Human Rights. These are amongst others, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention of Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). In 2006, Bangladesh was also elected a member to the newly formed United Nations Human Rights Council, and was then re-elected in 2009 and in 2012. In some parts, the constitution of Bangladesh is aligned with the international regulations on Human Rights; in that the constitution guarantees fundamental rights and liberties to the Bangladeshi citizens. This is more directly referred to in article III of the constitution, as it is stated that the constitution prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, sex, and caste (Sexual Rights Initiative 2009, p. 1). On the other hand, the penal code 1860 section 377 clearly prohibit carnal intercourse against the order of nature; where the penalty ranges up to ten years imprisonment (Sexual Rights Initiative 2009, p. 3), or may even extend to lifetime incarceration (Godwin 2010, p. 23). The ambiguity of the phrasing can also be used to penalize heterosexual acts as against the order of the nature. Importantly there has been no case tried under this section of the penal code (Sexual Rights Initiative 2009, p. 3), but it has been used in a normative sense; where it is considered acceptable for law enforcement agencies and others to bully persons that do not comply with the heteronormative structures of the Bangladeshi society (Godwin 2010, p. 22). In addition to the vulnerability of hijra as a sexual minority in Bangladesh, is that there are no law to penalize 'male-to-male' rape; as the conceptualization of rape in the society of Bangladesh is understood as an exclusively heterosexual problem, both socially and culturally (Sexual Rights Initiative 2009, p. 3). In social terms, there is therefore a growing risk of public acceptance of 'male-to-male' rape for corrective purposes or solely as a form of arbitrary punishment. There have been several listings of acts of punishments performed by vigilant groups, where local fatwas have been issued against those men perceived as having sex with men. These practices could influence an application of sharia law in local settings, in a country where sharia law is not institutionally applicable.

Additionally, hijras are also more vulnerable in sex trade situations. There have been reported incidents by the NGO Bandhu Welfare Society, where the law enforcement agencies most often are the abusers (Godwin 2010, p. 25). It has been explained as following:

“The *hijra* sex workers were exploited by clients, mugged, and beaten by hooligans but never received any police support. They hardly reported any incidents to police because of fear of further harassments. The law enforcing agents either raped a *hijra* sex worker and/or burglarized earnings from sex trade.... *hijra* are not safe in sex trade. They are forced to have unprotected sex with clients, local influential persons, and police free of charge.” (Islam Khan 2009, p. 446)

The legal system of Bangladesh is derived from the English common law system, and was inherited during the British colonial era (Godwin 2010, p. 22). Bangladesh is still holding on strong to legacies of the British colonial common law system, whilst the British kingdom itself is considered to be liberal when it comes to LGBT rights. In December 2008, the United Kingdom, together with 65 other countries signed a United Nations declaration calling for a global decriminalization of homosexuality (Imperial College, London - Equality and Diversity 2014). Bangladesh was however, not one of those

countries. When looking through the database of the Universal Periodic Review, Bangladesh has accepted many of the recommendations posed by other states. The recommendations that received the most firm rejection from Bangladesh had to do with abolishing the death penalty, and repealing section 377 of the penal code (UPR, info-Database).

The most recent change in the legal structure of Bangladesh is that it now officially recognizes hijra as a third gender next to the traditional male and female gender. The implication is that any official document will be issued stating one of these three types of genders. This is considered as a landmark decision, and it is said that under the new government policy the rights of all hijras will now be secured. The new legislation will, first and foremost, enable them to identify their gender in official documents, such as passports. The approval came in the weekly cabinet meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat. The hijra community welcomed the cabinet's decision, saying that it will be helpful to achieve other societal rights, as the community expresses hope for the future (The Daily Star 2013).

## **Chapter 3 – Literature review**

This study aims to unfold many concepts concerning the hijra phenomenon in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is necessary to take a look at the previous research of other scholars that are touching upon the concepts of relevance for this study. Previous literature on gender identity and media representation will be presented. Additionally, literature concerning transgender and heteronormativity, with focus on Bangladesh and the subject of LGBT, will be discussed.

### **3.1 Gender identity and media representation**

It is difficult to grasp the influence media has in a person's everyday life. Recent works of research have been tackling the issues of gender identity and media representation in a broader sense. This type of research have for long been narrowing gender identity down to two versions; male and female. This is enhancing the heteronormative ideas that have been dictating western societies for ages (Sloop 2006, p. 319). Critics to this view have mainly been arguing their case from three different angles varying from ideological standpoints, to liberating and/or constraining to even more progressive ideas where gender and sexuality are seen as a concept fluid over time and space (Sloop 2006, 321).

Gender in media has also been discussed adding on a racial distinction, as done in Brooks and Héberts section on gender, race, and media representation in Sage handbook on gender and communication. The reason to why race and gender as identical traits are measured together is as they are both seen as a social construction. Media is here seen as what represents our cultural realities. While the different sexes are rooted in biology, the term gender is instead based on culture (Brooks and Héberts 2006, p. 297-298).

The way scholars theorizing on gender identity is also aligned with the rise of new technologies. It advanced vastly during the 1990s, where the notion of new media got added in the studies (Consalvo 2006, p. 358). The challenge here lies within posing relevant research questions, whilst keeping up with the trends. One way of looking at it is; studying the intersections in gender and (new) media is critical to the general research of gender and communication (Consalvo 2006, p. 355). The challenge lies in finding the most current research on the topic of gender and media, as the field includes a rapid development given innovative uses of media (Consalvo 2006, p. 356).

The reason why media representation is important in this research is because media tend to shape the social (Couldry 2012, p. 98). The media is what can, in a timely manner, reach out to a broader public and assists in shaping the normative standpoint in a society.

### **3.2 Transgender in a social constructivist heteronormative context**

Harry Benjamin (1885-1986) has, according to Richard Ekins, been “the founding father of western transsexualism” (Ekins 2005, p. 306). Ekins explores the openness of Benjamin’s earlier work from the perspective of interrelating science, politics and clinical intervention. The reason why many scholars besides Ekins have been noticing the interrelation is because a tension between the fields has been obvious, but not sufficiently dealt with. Heteronormativity to Ekin is: “a perspective or ideological position that privileges heterosexuality...over other forms of sexual and gender expression” (Ekins 2005, p. 307). Within the heteronormativity, the transsexuals that choose to take steps to alter their bodies to match their perceived identity to take up a heterosexual role are more advantageous over transsexuals who choose another path (Ekins 2005, p. 308). Harry Benjamin was the first one to secure sex change surgery for suitable candidates, and has for those steps been seen as revolutionary. Although with these clinical steps, it was the beginning of transsexuality being seen as a diagnosis with sufficient treatment. This revolutionary medical step was in the forefront of privileging one type of transsexual experience over another (Ekins 2005, p. 310). Still, the revolutionary steps involved conforming individuals to the prevailing heteronormativity other than anything else.

Schilt and Westbrook (2009) have provided a more in-depth study on heteronormativity, in that they have brought attention to it by studying what might challenge it. People, whom make the social transitions that are termed transgender, are those whom go against the notion that gender identity is indisputably derived from biology. In social situations, it is the gender presentation of one’s self (Schilt & Westbrook 2009, p. 441), which dictates how a person is perceived by others. It is in the sexualized situations that male-bodied women and female-bodied men pose a challenge to heteronormativity (Schilt & Westbrook 2009, p. 441). How people then respond to the inconsistencies of heteronormativity can illuminate the process of every day appliance of heteronormative standpoints (Schilt & Westbrook 2009, p. 444).

### **3.3 LGBT in Bangladesh**

Many of the recent research on LGBT groups in Bangladesh, and in particular the sexual minority group of hijra, brings parallels between social exclusion and health complications. The study from Khan et.al. (2009) is an ethnographic study including several interviews and field research. The conclusion of the study brings to the forefront that the sociopolitical space is non-existing for the hijras, and stems from their non-recognition in the society where male-female gender construction is prevalent. It has in this study been described, that the social movement of the hijra community is lacking in power in Bangladesh, due to deficient support from the legal, religious and political spheres. Furthermore, the study from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by Chakrapani (2010) brings up the sexual minorities vulnerability to health risks such as HIV. The field of study is India, but many similarities can be traced back to the Bangladeshi society in consideration of the history of the South Asian region.



In more direct relation to LGBT in Bangladesh is the study conducted by Bondyopadhyay and Ahmed (2010). The study was initiated through the framework of the organization Bandhu Social Welfare Society based in Dhaka. The study brings to attention the differences and similarities of the different sexual minority groups in Bangladesh, and how the social movements of these are carrying out their work. The study also stipulates the challenges for the different groups included in the LGBT acronym. This study is separate from the above mentioned studies, in that it does not mainly focus on the health complications of the sexual minorities, but brings the actions of their movements into a broader spectrum.

Another study that includes a more general perspective of hijra life, is the one conducted by Hahm (2010). The main field of research is Pakistan instead of Bangladesh, but as with the previous study on India, there are many similarities and comparison points between Pakistan and Bangladesh based on the regional history which makes the study relevant. There are three dimensions of human security that are being studied. These are personal security, financial means and community building. The study concludes that what affects human security for hijras are age, location, family wealth and gender. The social construction of gender is something that plays an important role in the sense of security for the hijras, as it influences several practical insecurities, such as lack of access to the job market, lack of access to the education system and the lack of access to health care facilities.

## **Chapter 4 – Theory & Methodology**

The standpoint in this thesis derives primarily from the notion that culture plays a part in social norm structures, in the effect social movements generates and in the way media has an effect on what we know of our reality. The interconnectedness of culture, social norms, subcultures and media has been investigated comprehensively. In the work of W.W. Rostow, societal changes were reached through local institutions and the set of values existing in a society. Additional scholars have theorized that all societies which have, or are, going through the modernization process have developed an increased urbanization, literacy, mass medial use and participation (Rao & Walton ed. 2004, p. 167).

This thesis concerns the situation of the subcultural group of hijras in Bangladesh that has reached legislative change of their status, and hence travelled from being an illegitimate group excluded from most vital social structures, to being a recognized third gender achieved by one legislative change. As this study, focus on the representation of the hijra rights movement; the media representation can be seen as the meaningful interaction that creates reality. This meaningful interaction is mirrored in the chosen media texts for this study. The chosen texts constitute the discourse to be analyzed, where a constructivist theoretical approach is a self-given approach to this.

### **4.1 Theoretical framework**

The discourse that will be researched is the one of media representation of the hijra movement in Bangladesh that both leads up to- and followed the recent legislative change, where hijra has been recognized as the official third gender in Bangladesh. In doing so, the theoretical standpoint of social constructivism will be the starting point of the analysis. The ideas and how we communicate those ideas are what constitutes the reality that we live in. The communication tools of these ideas are constituted by three of the biggest journalistic platforms in Bangladesh, which are available on internet, and that also publish their articles in English. Furthermore, a study of the media



representation concerning the aspirations of the hijra rights movement will be rounding up the analysis. In order to conduct said analysis, familiarity with the relevant theoretical framework and concepts are needed.

#### **4.1.1 Social movements**

Inclusively and broadly defined, social movements can be considered as collective enterprises being run by agents (Crossley 2002, p. 3). Looking at it from this angle, we immediately see a distinction between the collective and the single individual; representing the agents constituting the enterprise. A social movement acts from the prerequisite to change an order of life. It is grown out of dissatisfaction, with a motive to find the cure to the dissatisfaction, and to in the longer run influence the social order to adapt and change for the 'better' (Crossley 2002, p. 3). The movement concerned with hijra rights in Bangladesh, and LGBT rights in general, has seemingly risen out of dissatisfaction with the discriminatory legislative framework, practice and social norms in Bangladesh.

The challenge with defining a social movement is that every movement is unique. The volatility in defining a social movement is conceptual, meaning that a social movement determines itself through the individuals making use of the concept, either by taking part in the movement or by only witnessing the work of the movement. By these means, we are discussing different intensities of the phenomenon of social practice being created by the ideas that are surrounding it, verbalizing it and in many ways constituting it (Crossley 2002, p. 2). With this in mind, it is even more important to investigate each circumstance where a social movement is active; the result of which might be that the study can be used in a comparable context. The upcoming research will take this into consideration while analyzing the hijra community, and the rights movement's representation on the chosen media platforms.

One requirement for a social movement to generate power through political agency is to facilitate for both the institutional collective level and individual level (Castells 2009, p. 10). Knowing the individual is; knowing its reasons to politically act and to partake in political agency (Couldry 2012, p. 125). This constitution might also be the very factor influencing a movement's uniqueness in relation to other movements. However, there are several more factors to consider, especially when it concerns the LGBT movement in Bangladesh. The factors that determine what role and shape it will take, depends on the culture of both the institutional and societal context.

As mentioned earlier, there has been an achievement in the form of a legislative change to officially recognize hijra as the third gender in Bangladesh. In other words, the movement is creating political agency to socially and judicially recognize the hijra as a gender form. How movements bring about change in societies can also be debated when looking deeper into what kinds of changes are immediately generated out of their agency. The image of a movement stirring up a revolution and enacting important legislative changes might be misleading the analysis. As emphasized by Crossley, major changes achieved by these types of movements are comparatively few. Instead, a social movement might have more of a local and cultural influence, rather than have a revolutionizing effect in politics and legislations (Crossley 2002, p. 8-9); even though this might be the long term result of a social movement's existence and persistent struggle. This is the reason why this study chooses to look at social norm structures through a discursive analysis and how media choose to portray the hijra struggle in Bangladesh.

#### **4.1.2 Social constructivism**

Constructivism is the field of theory that focuses on the connection between the ideational and the material (Hay 2002, p. 197). The core of constructivism lies often in the question if there is an external reality that is independent of our knowledge of it, and -in the longer run-, of our conception of it (Hay 2002, p. 199). The ideas that shape development as part of a political debate -, such as the hijra's role in the Bangladeshi society and the new recognition of hijra as an official third gender-, are more than just the beliefs of particular individuals. It is instead a matter of ideas that are shared among a group of people, and that becomes institutionalized; and furthermore being practiced. The ideas which become institutional framework cannot, in the end, be reduced to individual mindsets or beliefs. It is instead in the collective memories and culture, in which the ways of society lies. In other words, constructivism suggests that material forces and practices in reality are better understood in the social concepts that define their meaning of human life (Reus-Smit & Snidal ed. 2008, p. 301).

The analysis takes a focus on agency of the hijra rights movement and of the community it is protecting, in the attempt to outline the visibility and representation of the hijra movement in current media platforms in Bangladesh. It is therefore a change from a structuralist approach, to a more agency oriented constructivist approach; where a specific emphasis is on a sort of participatory agency within media representation. Cultural processes are seen as the general structures from which change grows. It can be harnessed for social- and economic transformation within a society such as Bangladesh. Cultural processes have the influence of the aspirations that grows within individuals and a certain group of people, which in turn create their agency to change their surroundings (Rao & Walton ed. 2004, s. 4).

Social constructivism represents the lenses through which we see the world, the changes being made, the end product and the reality at hand. This is also how the theory of social constructivism will be used; as it is the determining factor of the visibility and representation of the hijra movement on the media platforms of the authors' choice, and is therefore also a part of how the reality is viewed concerning the agency of the hijra rights movements in Bangladesh.

#### **4.1.3 Media representation and agency**

The theories of representation consist of three approaches, and are derived from the representation through meaning of languages. These are the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist or constructivist approaches. They are mostly used in an attempt to answer questions of the origin of meanings, and how the true meaning of a word or image can be communicated.

The reflective approach provides an understanding of meaning to lie in the object, the person, the idea or an event in the real world. The language that is being used to communicate this has the function of a mirror. It is very much in the eyes of the beholder that the meanings of the words come to life. The true meaning of the real world is being reflected by the text. The intentional approach includes a belief that it is the authors that impose their meaning of the words. It is, in this way, the author that creates the meaning of the words. The constructivist approach shows that it is the system of communication and the language which brings meaning to the material world. It is the social actors that are being heard, who construct meanings by using conceptual systems in order to communicate the culture and other representational systems. To this end, it is the symbolic function of the words being used that is the subject of study (Hall 1997, p. 24-26).

In true spirit of Couldry, there is no pure media theory applicable to this research. Instead, there is a selection of approaches that are all intertwined and depend on each other when conducting media oriented research (Couldry 2012, p. 32). In this thesis, there is a need for a theory on representation that is concerned with agency and the action that comes from it. This can be presented through a socially oriented media theory. Media is then seen as organized instruments and infrastructures that are being used in order to facilitate and direct communication (Couldry 2012, p. 8-9). Any media research can generate theory, as media is a particular- and historically embedded way of communicating meaning (Couldry 2012, p. 32-33). What is interesting to study, are the distinctive features of the selected media platforms for this study. By doing this, the aim is to be able to say something about cultural production of norm structures, by determining the space and agency of the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting. In the long run, it comes down to power structures or inequalities across the social life in Bangladesh.

Socially oriented media theory is one of several media theories that are intertwined with other approaches, which are; media studies/textual analysis, medium theory and political economy of media. It is impossible, according to Couldry, to single out one of these theories without using the others as foundation to the particular focus of the research. The focus in this thesis will lie significantly on socially oriented media theory, with the other ones forming building blocks to reach the end results. This theoretical approach consist of determining how media is put to use when forming social life, and also how the meanings created by a media discourse can have social consequences in a larger context (Couldry 2012, p. 34-35). In order to be able to comprehend the theoretical lens, we need to attend to social theory of construction, representation and contestation of the social (Couldry 2012, p. 35). The socially oriented media approach is in this thesis relevant, in that it allows a focus on action (subsequently it will outline the hijra movement's capacity to aspire). Media is here seen as infrastructure for organizing the channeling of communication.

In conducting such a research, some principles have been provided as a toolkit. The principles are used as concepts to understand the "types of order – and disorder – that result from media's deep embedding in social space" (Couldry 2012, p. 69). These are; 1) the principle of non-linearity, 2) the principle of analyzing media as practice and 3) the principle of materiality of representations. The first principle includes avoidance of some typical pitfalls when analyzing media. The awareness lies in contradictions, tensions and ambiguities that are said to affect media's social input. This principle involves two different accounts; one of how power is sustained across space, and one account of the everyday encounter with media and the strategies of the world it is informing us of (Couldry 2012, p. 70). This is where the norm structures and social constructivism has its place in the research. The understanding of how information from media affects the strategies of the world, in terms of forming recognition or further unrecognition of the hijra community. The second principle involves guidelines on how to manage the texts that are being studied. The world cannot be represented by texts, and one cannot gain complete insights by reading these texts. It is instead the practice of making and interpreting texts that, together with other practices and sources, constitutes the world and the situation of it (Couldry 2012, p. 29-30 & p. 71). This is where the chosen methodology of discourse analysis has its place, in that one cannot study a discourse without understanding the context of it. The third and last principle concerns that representations matter. This is where power structures are more visible. Here, the role of the media platforms is to show what there is to know about current situations. This is how the focus of the audience is directed (Couldry 2012, p. 30). This principle allows a more detailed analysis of representation (Couldry 2012, p. 71).

The aim of the study, in regards of representation, is to mostly draw attention to how the media platforms are directing the audience's attention concerning social and political matters. This is represented by the third principle above. The two preceding principles are more or less used as a foundation for the analysis in terms of theory and methodology, and how they interrelate. The contribution of the upcoming analysis is to increase the understanding of hijra representation in Bangladeshi media, and the creation of reality thereof. The next step of the analysis will be to determine the media's portrayal of the hijra rights movement and its agency, by looking at the movement's visible aspiration and its capacity to achieve these.

#### **4.1.4 Aspiration**

The importance of agency for a social movement is further studied through the framework of capacity to aspire. The legislative change in Bangladesh could be an increased capacity of one of the poorest subcultures in Bangladesh to further practice their own voice. It is the matter of being included, and able to participate in the setting of a democracy (Appadurai 2013, p. 186). The way the "voice" is being used, has been argued to depart from cultural norms in a larger context. The aspiration to make use of your voice is rarely on an individual scale. It is instead what is being formed in interaction within social life and its reality (Appadurai 2013, p. 187). Introducing the capacity to aspire into poor subcultures is an action of empowering that specific group. Logically the group of hijras would, by the achievement of the legislative change of recognition, have been empowered with a future growing capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2013, p. 189).

The change of their capacity will have to happen partly from within the particular subculture. Self-articulation is one vital part of changing the terms of recognition globally, regionally and locally. But these achievements require some further processes to take place. One process is the transformation of norms that surround the subculture of, in this case, the hijras in Bangladesh. Another one is the change of internal consensus when it comes to that particular subculture's practice and procedure, in other words; existing consensus are changed and a new one created (Appadurai 2013, p. 192). The situation of the hijras in Bangladesh is seen as highly marginalized, where poverty and exclusion from minimum daily requirements such as health services, housing and work are the reality many hijras live in. The situation is urgent. Therefore a change of the norms that exists within or around the hijras is not the best and most timely answer to the emergency they are living in. The best tool for the hijras would, in this sense, be their patience. The assistance from the rest of the society might be to negotiate the emergency they live in with patience. The capacity to aspire is a cultural capacity whose strengthening, in itself, creates a collective anguish for the subculture it serves (Appadurai 2013, p. 192-193).

This notion will constitute the last, futuristic and hypothetical section of the research. Also here, the research will depart from media representation, but the aim is to instead analyze the hijra rights movement's potential new found capacity to aspire further societal change for the community it protects.

## **4.2 Methodology**

The analysis will start out as a quantitative study where content analysis will be applicable. The aim is to determine the visibility of the hijra rights movement in the public sphere in general, and on the chosen media platforms in particular. The tables to be constructed in this section of the research will

give an overview of the frequency over time when articles about the hijra situation have been posted. Subsequently, there will also be tables illustrating the frequency of words that are being used when it concerns those media platforms that have articles published for a timespan of more than one year.

The following section will include the qualitative part of the study. Important to emphasize here is that by using a social constructivist standpoint, the method of discourse analysis is in some senses inevitable. It is argued that social constructivism and discourse analysis goes hand in hand; and that discourse is founded on a strong social constructivist epistemology (Hardy, Harley & Phillips 2004: 20). So by applying discourse analysis as method, my research therefore also joins a social constructivist epistemology and vice versa. The distinction from other qualitative methodologies is that discourse analysis is trying to generate views of the way reality is produced (Hardy, Harley & Phillips 2004: 19). Important to emphasize, is that the research is acceding to that part of discourse analysis where political dynamics are not studied per se. But rather to an empirical analysis that is developing further understanding of how the chosen discourse represents the struggle of the hijra movement in Bangladesh. The different media platforms are the subject of the study, and is then seen as the relevant occurrences that brings the struggle into existence and reifies it (Phillips & Hardy 2002: 21).

In order to be able to interpret the texts, and to show a certain level of transparency in the researcher's interpretations; the hermeneutic circle will be used in connection with Saussure's model on semiotics. This model will then represent the first steps in the hermeneutic circle concerning analyzing single words that creates the texts. Discourse analysis will take over when it comes to analyzing the grander context of the reality the texts partake in.

#### **4.2.1 Content analysis**

The method of content analysis will in this study represent the more systematic approach of the research. By applying content analysis when investigating the visibility of the hijra situation on the different media platforms, the study aims to include a more objective and comprehensive analysis. It has been argued that this is the only method for conducting media content analysis (Hansen et al. 1998 p. 91), and is therefore the most suitable choice of method to initiate the research with. There are some problems with applying content analysis, which need to be brought into light. One is that there is a notion about content analysis where the objectivity cannot be fringed upon (Hansen et al. 1998 p. 94). Others argue that while it might start out in an objective way quantifying the frequency of occurred themes, the analysis will always end up in subjective interpretation of the occurrences and the choices that has been made (Hansen et al. 1998, p. 95). By measuring the frequency of themes occurring in the text, a limitation with the method is created. Themes that occur infrequently in the texts might be ignored altogether in the analysis while they to some extent might be important (Burnham et al. 2008, p. 264).

Quantitative analysis is argued to be most valuable, when precision and objectivity in a research is needed more than others. In this research, this is not the case. The study takes on a more social constructivist agenda, where content analysis will function both as an initial phase of the research, and as a complement to the main method of discourse analysis.

An outline of the steps of content analysis concerning upcoming research is the following: the definition of the research problem is in this case, the visibility of the hijra situation on the chosen media platforms. The selection of the media sample will consist of articles about the hijra situation from three leading media platforms in Bangladesh that are published in English. The defining analytical categories are frequency over time of articles published concerning the hijra situation, and frequency of related themes over time within the three different media platforms. Basic coding schedule and its reliability will be presented later on together with the data-preparation, followed by the analysis and result of the research.

#### **4.2.2 Discourse analysis**

It would be difficult to completely depart from the method of discourse analysis after choosing a constructivist standpoint; as discourses are referring to a constructed knowledge about a particular topic (Hall 1997, p. 6). The idea is that physical action exists, but they only create meaning and become knowledge within the setting of discourse. This represents the heart of a constructivist theory (Hall 1997, p. 45). But in order to study the constructivist approach, we need more specific guidelines. This can be found in the way the constructivist approach creates links between three different orders; people, events and experiences. Culture here is then seen as a process where the use of words creates meaning to the material world (Hall 1997, p. 61).

Why discourse analysis is a given choice for this research, is the way it focuses the attention to what role language, texts, conversations and the media plays in the creation of new institutions, and in the shaping and re-shaping of individual and common behavior. In this way a discourse refers to the actions of talking and writing from which social reality is constructed. The articles on the chosen media platforms can be used to determine the origins and developments of a certain discourse, and how it has or could have legitimized some legislative changes whilst marginalizing other suggestions for social change (Burnham et al. 2008, p. 250).

One important notion to keep in mind is that a discourse analysis is derived from an assumption that all actions are meaningful, and that conditions from the history have an effect on the social reality we are living in today. The origins of social practices are vital to include in the study (Burnham et al. 2008, p. 251). Therefore, this is where the cultural traits of Bangladesh play a role in this study. Finally, by showing who gains and who loses from a certain discourse, an analysis of such can gain important insight and further understanding of one particular social process (Burnham et al. 2008, p. 251).

#### **4.2.3 Textual analysis and hermeneutics**

The text of mass media speaks to the audience in a different way than oral face-to-face conversations do. In the latter, it is much more up to the communicators to make themselves understood, and it is completely separate from the former. The author has very little control of the interpretation of mass medial texts when they reach the audience (Gripsrud 2002, p. 128). Hermeneutics on its own started out as a methodological tool in order to understand and interpret what was seemingly incomprehensible (Gripsrud 2002, p. 129). This disciplinary field will be used as the framework of how one arrives at an understanding of a text, and how it is formed into knowledge of a certain topic. The most important action is the one of reading. Reading is the process from which meaning is created. When applying hermeneutics as a framework, it is important to keep in mind

how the act of interpretation proceeds. The hermeneutic circle is an easy way to do this, as it involves understanding and interpretation on different levels, which are; each word individually, gradually, cumulatively and finally the sentence as a whole (Gripsrud 2002, p. 133).

In addition, an interpreter or researcher can, when applying hermeneutics, never bypass themselves and their own backgrounds or social and cultural conditions to the situation where the text is being interpreted. It is therefore important to apply self-reflection in the act of interpretation (Gripsrud 2002, p. 135), as is the case in most research. There are furthermore several strategies when applying hermeneutics to a research exercise. The one of most relevance for this thesis is symptomatic interpretative strategy, where the aim is to discover the texts as they were intended to be interpreted by the sender (Gripsrud 2002, p. 142). By doing this the study involves the media's role in the discourse and how the media platforms are -by social constructivist means- creating reality.

The methodological framework of hermeneutics is complementary to the previously chosen discourse analysis. In order to understand the text as a whole, it is also important to understand the context from which the text is derived. This is where the discursive methodological framework serves a purpose.

#### 4.2.4 Analytical framework

In order to present the analytical results of the research, basic coding schemes will be applied. This is being done for the purpose of being more transparent in the interpretations made when analyzing the chosen texts. The first section of the analysis concerns the visibility of the hijra situation on three different media platforms. What will be measured is, first and foremost, the frequency over time of articles published concerning the hijra situation. Subsequently, additional research concerns the frequency of related themes over time within the three different media platforms. The coding schemes of measuring this are basic tables created with tools of word count. The first table to be used concerns publishing date and title of the article, and looks as following:

Publishing date	Title

Table 1: Example of table showing frequency of published articles over time

The second table to be used in the first section of the analysis concerns a basic word count to identify frequency of themes in the beginning of the reporting of the hijra situation and present time. This analytical task is conducted with the help from the website [www.wordcounter.com](http://www.wordcounter.com). All the smaller words will be deselected, and only the 25 most prominent words will be included in this research. The table that shows the result of this practice looks as following:

Word	Frequency

Table 2: Example of table showing frequency of words used within an article

The next coding scheme stems from Saussure's model, and will be available when studying the medial representation of the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting. In order to combat the critique of his model, which only focuses on signifier and signified (meaning of the concept) individually without little attention to the relationship (Hall 1997, p. 32), this analytical



framework will produce an interpreted meaning of the connection between those two. The focus will therefore instead be on the language itself within the chosen texts, the representation of them, and on what role it plays in creating meaning; as is in the spirit of Saussure's own legacy. The framework will look as following:

Signifier	Definition	Signified

Table 3: Example of table to be used when applying the analytical framework of Saussure

The signifier or signifiers will be chosen from the texts, as the more apparent wording/wordings concerning the main subject in the article. A definition will be provided by the interpreter and the researcher of this thesis, and it will be put in relation to the meaning of the concept as the signified.

### 4.3 Selection of data

The selection of data is conducted by using the search function in the archive of three of Bangladesh's most used media platforms available in English. The search word that has been used is simply 'hijra'. In each media platform there has been an all-inclusive selection made. After the first initial selection a more in-detail selection of relevant texts has been made; which resulted in choosing only the articles that more deliberately discusses the hijra situation in Bangladesh. The texts that have been left out are the articles where merely the word hijra has been mentioned but where there is no further contextual deliberation. Articles are mainly representing the Daily Star and the Dhaka Tribune. Few articles were found in New Age but they are considered relevant to analyze as a complement or comparison to the other two media platforms. In following section, the three chosen media platforms will be presented with information from their own digital platforms.

#### 4.3.1 The Daily Star



The Daily star started out in 1991, with the aim of producing independent news with a long lasting objective to strengthen public opinion on how democracy should work. Neutrality in the reporting is a value that The Daily Star advocates together with rule of law, human rights, gender issues, national interests, press freedom, and transparency. By applying these values, The Daily Star argues that they are maintaining its "sincerity and accountability to serve the nation the way it is bound by its norms and values". Next to regular news reporting, The Daily Star also includes other featured articles.

The Daily Star includes their own unofficial gender policy, which mainly entails the promotion of female journalists, and they have announced that currently 17% of their staff consists of women. No other division between genders, besides the standard male-female, are mentioned in the newspapers own reporting of their structure (The Daily Star 2014). There is no further information about the function of their archive, or how far back it dates. It requires help from Google's search system in order to sort-out its content when adding the search word; "hijra".



#### 4.3.2 New Age



New Age is, together with others, one of the main sources when it comes to English news reporting. Its slogan is “the outspoken daily”. There is no information about the newspaper available on the webpage of New Age. The New Age platform is severely lacking in function and information. There is a risk of disappointing search results, although the lack of articles matching the search word of “hijra” could be a result on its own. Moreover, there is a lack of information for the English speaking visitor on the New Age’s webpage. Lastly, the archive only shows that articles from 2014 are available by following the number of articles present each month (New Age, 2014), which shows as following:

[December 2014](#) (832)

[November 2014](#) (3093)

[October 2014](#) (3068)

[September 2014](#) (3337)

[August 2014](#) (3114)

[July 2014](#) (3109)

[June 2014](#) (3219)

[May 2014](#) (3230)

[April 2014](#) (2211)

[March 2014](#) (264)

#### 4.3.3 Dhaka Tribune



Dhaka Tribune aims to be the new voice of a changing Bangladesh. Dhaka Tribune is committed to the mission of delivering the public impartial news. Their pledge to the public is to seek the truth, and deliver facts together with an analysis of the context when it is considered as needed. In addition to this, Dhaka Tribune aims to give a voice to the voiceless and take into consideration all citizens’ interests. It is committed to the values of the country, democracy and secularism, and assist in building a prosperous, equitable and tolerant society (Dhaka Tribune, 2014).

### Chapter 5 – Analysis of the hijra rights movement in Bangladesh

The analysis will be presented in the upcoming sections, and concerns the three chosen platforms. The aim here is to present the analysis that is done in order to answer the posed research questions. The results will be further presented and discussed in the next chapter. The presented analysis is simply divided by the following categories and keywords: visibility, representation and aspiration.

## 5.1 Visibility

The visibility of the hijra rights movement in Bangladesh represents the more quantitative section of the analysis. The measurements will consist of frequency and timespan, but also include a quick comparison of the general context of how the movement has been presented throughout time. This will serve as an introduction to the next section of the analysis, where a more in-depth and qualitative study of the texts will take place.

Furthermore, this section will include a quantitative analysis which looks at the most commonly used words in the articles leading up to today. In doing this, the aim is to get a glimpse of the development of the topic and themes concerning the hijra situation within the three different media platforms.

Special awareness is dedicated to the fact that there has been some problems concerning the availability of articles in the platforms own archives. The New Age's search engine resulted in far less articles than the other two. Concerning this platform, there is overview of how many items are available in the archive. Here it is obvious that the content of the archive only dates back to the beginning of 2014. With regards to the other two platforms, there is no knowledge of how far their archives date back to, or how many items are available in the archive. Therefore, it will be difficult to, by comparison, conclude the visibility of the hijra situation on the platforms of The Daily Star and Dhaka Tribune. However, this situation will of course be taken into consideration when concluding the results concerning the measurement of the visibility of the hijra situation on these three platforms.

### 5.1.1 The Daily Star

The frequency of articles in The Daily Star concerning the hijra situation in Bangladesh has infrequently been increasing since 2005. One article of the hijra situation in Bangladesh was published in 2005, and the next one was not published until 2007. It was not until the year 2009 that the Daily Star chose to publish more than one article, which improved in 2010 when three articles regarding the hijra situation got published. 2010 is also when, judging by the titles of the articles, the situation of hijra really got addressed as a hidden problem in the Bangladeshi society; together with the first article in the archive of The Daily Star that dates back to the latter half of 2005. In 2011 and in 2012, the hijra issue is still underrepresented considering the amount of articles getting published each day. Even 2013, the year leading up to the legislative change in Bangladesh, held a low representation level in articles that brings up the hijra situation or the hijra rights movement. However, this was to change in 2014, the year after the legislative change was introduced. The year of 2014 holds the most articles published concerning hijras in Bangladesh since 2005. The contexts of their titles have now changed understandably, as the recent news reporting consists mostly of the legal discourse of the hijra development. This is all represented by the table below:

Publishing date	Title
2005-09-26	Fighting for survival...Hermaphrodites remain despised, deprived of rights
2007-06-11	Separate gender identification for hermaphrodites demanded
2008-08-23	Third gender: In search of recognition
2008-12-29	'Hijras' still deprived of franchise
2009-04-30	Organised crimes by hijras shoot up
2009-06-25	Hijra panic grips city dwellers

2010-01-30	Hijras in Bangladesh: A story untold
2010-03-24	Panic attack by hijras at Uttara: two hurt
2010-04-13	Take action against fake eunuchs
2011-05-13	Avant-garde art in old Dhaka
2011-10-21	Incorporating the “Others” into the Mainstream
2011-10-22	Hijras seek rights, recognition
2011-10-30	Negative attitude towards transgender people decried
2012-04-23	Ensure transgender people’s rights
2012-07-20	Silence beneath the Glitz
2012-12-08	Heights of success as an actor
2013-11-11	Cabinet approves Hijra identity
2013-11-21	Very Graphic! “ The art of storytelling in graphic detail”
2013-12-10	Better late than never
2014-01-24	Courage, thy name is woman
2014-04-15	Transgenders now ‘3 <sup>rd</sup> gender’ in India
2014-04-29	Law letter- Rights discourse of Hijras
2014-05-14	Nafis Ahmed’s “Innate Identities” at Bengal Galley
2014-06-22	Bye to discrimination?
2014-07-17	Passing of proposed law urged
2014-11-13	Intersecting gender
2014-11-25	Law needed to stop acts of discrimination

Table 4: Frequency of articles over time in The Daily Star

To be able to conduct a quantitative and quick analysis of the content of the articles; the first article published about the hijra will be compared to the last article published. The comparison point is the most frequent word used in the article. The aim here is to quickly say something about a change in discourse between 2005 and 2014, or a lack of change at all. The result from the article published in 2005 is:

Word	Frequency
hermaphrodit	12
bakul	11
hermaphrodite	7
guru	7
house	6
live	6
hijra	5
many	4
community	4
society	4
life	3
said	3
reside	3
rent	3
city	3
dhaka	3
syphilis	3
sex	3

poppy	3
school	3
depriv	3
haider	3
become	3
badhan	2
earn	2

**Table 5: Frequency of words in The Daily Star article “Fighting for survival...Hermaphrodites remain despised, deprived of rights”, 2005-09-26**

These results shows a tendency of including social words, such as house, reside, school, and rent; which are representative of the situation we know the hijras found themselves in, where they are excluded from most social necessities. Little legal or political agency can be detected from the result of this word count. This is of course not representative for the whole discourse of the visibility of the hijra situation on this media platform. The result of the word count functions instead as an indication of the start of this particular part of the discourse.

There is also a frequency of the word “syphilis,” which represents the health issues the hijra community faces due to them not being able to access health facilities, and often due to their forced occupation and/or the sexual violence. One of the words being used the most is “guru,” which points to the traditional living arrangements, lifestyle.

The last article from 2014 includes the following word count:

Word	Frequency
people	9
said	6
dalit	6
right	5
law	5
bangladesh	5
actionaid	5
act	4
human	4
commission	3
star	3
antyaja	3
dignity	2
member	2
mizanur	2
discrimination	2
executive	2
regional	2
prevent	2
board	2
national	2
prof	2
rahman	2

chairman	2
did	2

**Table 6: Frequency of words in The Daily Star article “Law needed to stop acts of discrimination”, 2014-11-25**

In comparison with the first article in which social words were more dominant, the last article published that takes part in this study show a higher level of word frequency when it comes to agency. The words that stand out are rights, law, actionaid and commission. Instead of the societal words of basic human needs, this shows a context where the agency of the hijra situation in Bangladesh reflects a more pro-active context in the words used.

The conclusion is that a change in discourse seems to be apparent throughout the studied timespan of this platform. Further deliberation in the qualitative section will be concerning if the change in discourse might have represented also a change in a potential achieved agency for the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting.

### 5.1.2 New Age

There are two different ways to search for articles on the New Age platform. One is through the available search engine, and the other one is through a link titled “old archive”. When searching for articles including the concept of hijra in the old archives of New Age, there is no match. Although, a limited match is found when searching through the search bar available on the home page of the website. As stated earlier, seemingly the archive only dates back until the beginning of 2014; where the total items available in the archives add up to 25 477 items. Out of these items, the situation of the hijra in Bangladesh is dedicated to 6 articles in the New Age digital archive. For readers that would like to go back in history with regards to the articles published in New Age on hijra’s situation in Bangladesh, the articles below are the result:

Publishing date	Title
2014-04-21	Indian transgender stands for parliament seat
2014-05-15	Innate identities: Lives of hermaphrodites captured through lens
2014-10-25	First Hijra day to be observed on Nov 10
2014-11-04	Hijras demand recognition under legal framework
2014-11-11	Hijras say want to live with dignity
2014-11-14	Mohakal to celebrate 150 <sup>th</sup> show of Shikhandi Kotha

**Table 7: Frequency of articles over time in New Age**

The articles were published after the legislative change came into effect and, according to the titles, are shaped accordingly. The exception to this includes the artistic expressions of presenting the situation of the hijras in Bangladesh. In this search result of finding relevant articles, there is no reason to compare the contextual development since the timespan is limited. Therefore, the frequency word count will be excluded in this section. The analysis of reoccurring themes will have to be represented by the findings above where the articles are stated to concern partly the theme of legislative change and partly the theme of art. Further analysis on the type of representation will be considered in the next chapter.

### 5.1.3. Dhaka Tribune

The available articles regarding the hijra situation in Bangladesh date back to the beginning of 2013. The published articles have a frequency of one article every couple of months, with the exception of

March, September, October and November 2014; where two or more articles each month were published. The hijra situation has received a steadily increasing visibility on the Dhaka Tribune platform during the period of two years. These two years have also been the years surrounding the new legislative change, which came into effect in the end of 2013. The contexts of the articles, from what can be understood from their titles, have remained the same throughout the two years. Said contexts concern the political and the legal recognition, together with some regular news reporting involving some individual hijras in Bangladesh.

Publishing date	Title
2013-01-26	Transgenders demand representation in parliament
2013-07-04	Trans people yet to get NID recognition
2013-09-09	Smart Card planned to recognize identity of intersexed people
2013-11-11	Hijras now a separate gender
2013-11-15	Hijras kill minor for Tk400
2014-01-26	Hijra killed for 'stealing' mobile phone
2014-03-06	Always a fighter
2014-03-20	A missed opportunity to address LGBT issues
2014-05-11	No disrespect meant
2014-08-24	Transgender woman seeks legal recognition
2014-09-04	Call me Heena Shahria Sharmin
2014-09-04	"Diversity Voices"
2014-09-11	Equality in the eye of the law?
2014-10-13	Bring sexuality out in the open
2014-10-25	Hijras demand proper recognition as the third gender
2014-11-02	Hijras demand proper recognition and safety
2014-11-11	A joyful celebration of inclusion

Table 8: Frequency of articles over time in Dhaka Tribune

Similar to the analysis of the visibility of the hijra situation in Bangladesh as seen from the lens of The Daily Star, there will be a quantitative and quick analysis of the content of the articles. Only the first article published in 2013 about hijras, will be compared to the last article published in the end of 2014. The comparison points are the most frequent words used in the articles. The aim here is to quickly say something about a change in discourse between 2013 and 2014, or a lack of change at all.

The result from the article published in the beginning of 2013 is:

Word	Frequency
right	5
transgender	5
live	4
transsexual	3
said	3
hijra	3
govern	3
people	3
brief	3
population	3
civil	2

press	2
necessary	2
national	2
demand	2
parlia	2
ensure	2
since	2
state	2
mitu	2
social	2
present	2
urg	1
want	1
normal	1

Table 9: Frequency of words in Dhaka Tribune article "Transgenders demand representation in parliament", 2013-01-26

The words that stand out in this frequency word count are: right, govern, state, population and civil. The context of the words used seems to be mostly concerning a power structure of the population, the state and the governing mechanisms. These words point to a clear relation to the agency of the governing structures in Bangladesh, which brought on the recent legislative change in the country.

The word count frequency for the last article selected from the period of 2014 is:

Word	Frequency
hijra	7
programme	5
dance	5
hijras	5
festival	5
talent	4
said	4
community	4
competition	4
hunt	4
bangladesh	4
performance	4
islam	3
cultural	3
many	2
see	2
ral	2
won	2
consultation	2
performer	2
recognition	2
art	2
last	2
right	2

**Table 10: Frequency of words in Dhaka Tribune article "A joyful celebration of inclusion", 2014-11-11**

The words that have the most frequency in the article and which stand out from the selection above are; festival, talent, culture, Islam, performance, consultation, right and recognition. The result of this word count represents mainly society context. The words bring the hijra situation to a cultural context of both religion and performance, which connects the audience to the historical path of hijras in Bangladesh as celebrated and mythical performance artists.

The conclusion of the word count in this section is the opposite from the one performed regarding the Daily Star platform. Here the discourse changes from a legal and political context to a more society and cultural oriented context. The implication of these results will be further elaborated on in the next section where the discourse is analyzed regarding the media representation of the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting.

## 5.2 Representation

The type of representation that the hijra situation in Bangladesh received through the chosen media platforms is a study of the article's content, and also the contexts in which they were produced. This is a qualitative study, and will constitute the foundation of this thesis's discourse analysis. Every individual article that has been chosen from each media platform will be studied. Within this study there will be a specific analytical mission in following the hermeneutic circle; where important wordings in the article will not only be studied as separate entities, but also together as the complete sentences which form the article. However, this mission requires awareness from the researcher with regards to the context in which these articles have been produced. This awareness is accounted for by the gained knowledge of the Bangladeshi society, which has been previously presented in this thesis. The texts are to be analyzed with a methodology where the subjectivity of the researcher might matter tremendously. Importantly, subjectivity always exists in this type of research. The aim of this analytical section is, therefore, to present the results of the research and analysis together with transparency on how the results have been established. The aim is also to discuss how the hijra rights movement has been conceptualized within the discourse created by each of the chosen media platforms.

### 5.2.1 The Daily Star

This analysis will focus on the hijra situation before, and after the legislative change. The focus of the analysis will mainly be on the existing normative structures that are maintained or created by the media discourse concerning the hijra situation in Bangladesh, and the movement working to promote the rights for the hijra community and its individuals.

The financial and social status of the hijra is very often discussed from the perspective of the hijras. It is stated that they are one of the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh; with no access to basic education, health services or employment opportunities. From the discourse presented by the Daily Star platform, it is clearly evident that the norm in Bangladesh is that hijras are not valuable as employees or as the receivers of training efforts. It is visible through formulations such as: "Being incapable to earn livelihood through any decent means, some transsexuals are compelled to sell sex to live" (The Daily Star, 2010:a). The words that stand out in a sentence like this are 'incapable' and 'decent', both are subjective to the reader's own ideas of the words as outlined below;



Signifier	Definition	Signified
Incapable	Not being able to perform to a certain standard	Undervalued

Table 11: Interpretation of 'incapable'

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Decent	Subjective notion or morale of what is proper	Acceptable standards

Table 12: Interpretation of 'decent'

The first word has a negative tone when explaining the role of the hijra in the Bangladeshi society as a whole. It is here noted, that it is the hijras that are seen as incapable. It could therefore be seen as implied, that it is the hijras themselves that are incapable, and not the society the hijra live in that are incapable of providing them a surrounding of opportunity that is free from discrimination. The second word explains the traditional type of means and tools some hijras use to earn a living. In the past, this was from an occupation as entertainers and blessing-givers, today their occupation has transformed into sex trade and extortion. These means are in this discourse not seen as decent. It is implied that the only occupations the hijras are capable of having, are the ones that boarder on criminality and that are regarded as indecent.

Another sentence that represents the hijra status in the society, as according to existing norm structures, is: "They could become assets for the country rather than choosing to bully people in the streets or choosing to take prostitution as their profession" (The Daily Star, 2013:a). Here the norms in the sentence are visible through the use of the word "could", when describing hijra as a possible asset for the country. Once again this implies that the hijras had, as of the time of the writing, little or no value to the society. There is also a normative standpoint in the usage of the word "choose", when describing a hijra occupation. It is here implied that it is an active choice by one hijra to bully for money or turning to prostitution to make a living. The responsibility of the society as a whole is taken out of the equation. These articles react to current or past events, stating what has been going on in the sphere of the society where the hijras are active. The content of these articles could therefore be considered as having no effect or even negative effect concerning the existing norm structures. Statements like the ones above rather enhance the existing societal norms that are currently being combated by the hijra rights movement and by other minority rights organizations in Bangladesh.

The normative values of Bangladesh seep through within this part of the discourse. One professional that has undergone training in order to communicate with the discriminated group of hijras, in order to develop their practical abilities to match the job market, states: "In order for them to feel that they are normal, we must treat them like they are normal" (The Daily Star, 2011:b). This was said in 2011 by someone working with the enhancement of hijra presence on the job market. Coming from someone working with training hijras; it is obvious by the choice of wording that the hijra situation is not seen as "normal". This idea of them as being not normal and less capable than others continues throughout the same article. Later on in 2013, after the recent legislation, it has been stated by the author of the article that the context of the new legislative change should be reconsidered, and that the interaction processes with the hijra community will be better in the future (The Daily Star, 2013:a). This indicates that the legislative change is not considered as enough from the hijra

perspective and that improvement is needed through communicative means with the hijra community. It points to a very abstract sense of improvement, as no further elaboration is given.

These norms are what hijras themselves are, in articles written from their perspective, trying to combat. The perspective of the hijras is represented both by hijra's own voices through interviews, or by the author writing the article through their own understanding of the hijra situation in Bangladesh. Although there are some attempts at change in the articles, as few venture to act proactively and norm changing. This is done through urges to every family to cherish an intersexed born baby as much as any other baby (The Daily Star, 2013:a). In this way, there is an awareness presented of the social constructivist power the platform has in regards of creating a new lens through which the hijras, and their situation can be understood through. The movement is pledging to the state and the government to take action for their sake, whilst recognizing that the problem cannot be fixed solely from legislative and political agency, but also from a personal-, society- and family oriented approach. "Being recognised by the state is vital..." (The Daily Star, 2008:b), is a quote from a group of hijras that has been interviewed in one article from 2008. Recognition by the state and action to be taken by the government is, throughout the discourse, seen as the most important part in the movement for the hijra. This directs the focus of the audience on the governing state institution's agency, and very little attention is given to the hijra movement's own agency and power to take action.

Much of the visible space that hijras receive on the Daily Star platform is constituted by reporting on the crimes conducted by hijras. The newspaper acts in this way as a tool for people to find information on where groups of hijras have been seen extorting money. This is done by naming all the neighborhoods that have witnessed this type of crime, or neighborhoods that have had some hijras present (The Daily Star, 2009:a). Logically this type of reporting could add to the common fear that so many Bangladeshi citizens have voiced within the media, while at the same time it is a common practice for newspapers to report on the criminality that is affecting the society. There are problems with this type of reporting in a conservative society like Bangladesh, where the existing norms are speaking against the capabilities of the hijras. When there is limited media visibility of the hijra movement in general, this type reporting will logically constitute a significant part of the received visibility within the media discourse. The result is that it adds to the existing norm structure of fearing the hijras and avoiding their existence; rather than adding to the idea where the society as a whole is acting to change the norm structures that its members acts according to. Another article that has addressed the problem of hijras committing crimes to make a living has been directed differently. The article is reporting on news events in the society, but the ending the article includes the perspective of the hijras. The problem is then not solely the responsibility of the hijra community to make a more acceptable way of living, but the article argues instead that since they are neglected by the society; they are forced to find new ways to survive (The Daily Star, 2009:b). This could be the start of a norm changing discourse, as seen through the lens of The Daily Star. The responsibility lies here with the society that has been neglecting the hijras, instead of blaming, shaming and providing new ways of avoiding contact with this subculture.

After the introduction of the new legislation, the discourse in the media in 2014 shifted focus to another legislative suggestion by the law commission. It concerns an antidiscrimination law, together with an antidiscrimination court (The Daily Star, 2014:e). This law is not believed to dramatically improve the status of the hijras immediately, but rather designates to the society what it is doing

wrong; as this law will include all the minorities in Bangladesh. The media platform of The Daily Star has not yet engaged in the context of concretely indicating to the society what could be done better in regards to the hijra situation, but is instead reflecting the suggestion put forward by the law commission without any deliberations.

Furthermore, art is given a lot of space in the part of the discourse that has been created by The Daily Star. Many artists such as, filmmakers, actors, photographer and cartoon artist have incorporated the hijra situation into their works of art. The perspective of the discourse is then shifted from explaining the hijra situation as a dark and traumatic existence where people show little or no understanding of the hijra community and the context they live in; to a positive, grateful and hopeful perspective. This is interpreted by the choice of words these artists have used in order to express their views that have been communicated by the Daily Star platform. One cartoon project involves a working class superhero, who is a hijra-fighter that turns cocktail blasts into laughing gas to calm the hoodlums in the area. In one series of photographs titled “Hijra”, the hijras were portrayed in glittery clothing and was intended to, as the critic from The Daily Star said, not to give insight into the community, but more to sensualize them. Another artist, Nafis Ahmed, whom incorporated hijra into his work of photography, argued on the platform that he wanted to give a voice to the hijras. The article informs that: “There are strong traditions followed by the hijras. What attracted him to the community, says Nafis, is their love of colors. They have a vibrant, energetic happy life, which one must consider.” (The Daily Star, 2014:d). This vibrant and energetic happy life is something that the Bangladeshi citizens, through the platform of the Daily Star, have otherwise had very little contact with. It can be deemed as important that The Daily Star continue reporting on these artistic exhibitions. These articles bring another perspective of the hijra life that could be very valuable in changing the norm structures concerning hijras in Bangladesh.

### 5.2.2 New Age

Due to available data from this platform, this part of the analysis will only include texts that were published after the legislative change went into effect at the end of 2013. The theme of the discourse is therefore determined by the fact that hijra received their legal recognition as the third gender group in Bangladesh. This part of the discourse represents scarce news reporting with very little nuance, and with a neutral and reflective way of retelling the story of the hijras; which is evident in the upcoming analysis.

The context of the hijra situation and the discourse presented by the New Age platform concerns the activities of how to best ensure their rights after a legal recognition has come into place. One article starts out with the statement that, even one year after the new legislation has come into place; “no further policy had been adopted for protecting their rights” (New Age, 2014:e). The movement that is promoting hijra rights and other minority groups in Bangladesh are looking for an inclusive law to protect the rights of these communities. The same article proposes a problem involving the two words of ‘guarantee’ and ‘ensure’. It is stated that one law maker responded to the issue that the rights of hijras were guaranteed by the constitution. The law maker continued that a “comprehensive law must be enacted to ensure their rights.”

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Guarantee	An assurance for the fulfillment of a condition	Secured rights

Table 13: Interpretation of 'guarantee'

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Ensure	To make something sure, certain or safe	Active promise

Table 14: Interpretation of 'ensure'

However, there have been no further discussions on neither how the rights of the hijras can be secured, or a presentation on how the law makers are able to keep a promise of combining constitutional values in the everyday life of the society. There is a lack of deliberation and context of within the articles constituting this part of the discourse.

In relation to what was presented above, the news reporting on this media platform involves little suggestions, both from the author's side and from the perspective of the hijras, on what is needed in order for the hijras and the society to be able to ensure their rights. In this way, the New Age platform involves statements that do not further elaborate or contextualize the hijra situation after the legislative change.

As a direct response to the legislative change, a "Hijra Day" was created to celebrate the anniversary of the day that hijras in Bangladesh received state recognition. The day is then celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, and aims at promoting hijra rights in the Bangladeshi society. The focus of the articles shifted from including recognition, to including social awareness, in order for their recognition to be inclusive and their rights to be ensured. This article takes the character of a more reflective approach, in that it aims at informing its readers about the celebration of the hijra day, but does not further contextualize the meaning of the day or conceptualize the message to come across.

The one article presenting the work of an artist shows little or no change in discourse in comparison to the previous platform that was studied. Once again the photographer Nafis Ahmed receives attention. It is stated that his work presents an in-depth representation of the lives of a group of people that "generally are feared and avoided by ordinary people" (New Age, 2014:b).

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Fear	An emotion induced by a perceived threat	Subjective emotion

Table 15: Interpretation of 'fear'

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Ordinary	Normal or average and not unusual or special	Normative judgment

Table 16: Interpretation of 'ordinary'

No further discussion is given to the thought process behind the artist work, or in what way that artist is involved in the situation of the hijras. The visible statement of the article just reconfirms the prejudices citizens of Bangladesh have when it comes to hijras. It is merely stated that people fear the hijras, and that ordinary people are the ones behind this judgment. Once again the normative stand of hijras vs. normalcy is presented. The article can therefore not be said to offer any other

insights into the situation, or attempt to be norm changing in any way; other than informing the society of what is and what has been.

The New Age platform represents a traditional standpoint which the society of Bangladesh has when it comes to the subculture group of hijra. The discourse shows little contextualization and conceptualization regarding the issues presented, and is merely reflecting on the situation without any further deliberations. It lacks nuance within the plain descriptions of the events taking place after the legislative change, and there's only one article that moves the perspective to the hijra community. This is done when the situation in India is discussed in an article, which outlines one Indian transgender's campaign for a seat in parliament. This politician describes the situation when campaigning with following words: "It is only when they hear what I have to say and see me in person that they can get past the fact that I am a transgender" (New Age, 2014:a) This statement brings a hopeful tone to the transgenders of the Indian subcontinent, where the mission needed is to bridge the gap in a segregated society between minority communities and "ordinary" people. Only then could the societal "fear" of the hijras be, possibly, cured.

### 5.2.3 Dhaka Tribune

The discourse created by the platform of Dhaka Tribune is seemingly more progressive, and more elaborative than the other platforms. It is not imprinted with traditional norm structures of the hijra situation, but instead shows a willingness to conceptualize the hijra word, the context concerning the hijra and the possible solutions to what the hijra movement is set out to achieve. It brings the discussion of hijras to a new level of both academic insights from a hijra perspective, while at the same time keeping the tone of neutral news reporting. I will utilize the following paragraphs to discuss and elaborate on this analysis.

The platforms bring to light the discussion on how to conceptualize the word hijra as a subject of relevance for the secretary cabinet. It is stated that the word hijra needs to prevail in both Bangla and English, with the understanding that any other translation is misleading (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:l). Another discussion concerns the different terms used for hijras, which are hermaphrodites, eunuchs, and transgender or transsexual women. With the legislative change, a new term has been in this discourse deemed as more appropriate; that of 'third gender'. Subsequently in the same article, it is explained by someone who used to have prejudices against hijras; that when meeting one hijra and by gaining insight into their world, it helped that person to see beyond the word of hijra. Therefore, this implies that it's the word "hijra" which has been tainted with prejudices in the Bangladeshi society, and it is not until one is involved in hijra life and interact with them; that the prejudices can be let go of (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:f). This is a reoccurring theme of the articles on this platform that are discussing the situation for hijras in Bangladesh. They are conceptualizing the term hijra in different contexts of gender, self-identity and the role social constructivism plays in this area of expertise (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:e).

Moreover, sexuality in general is discussed to add to the understanding of how the misconceptions of the hijra situation have been created. The issues that hijras are facing are bigger than only prejudices against the third gender, but can also be derived from the general gender system in Bangladesh that is rooted in the past and is not adapted to the "...realities of the modern world..." (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:i). This is also mentioned in another article that creates this particular part of the discourse. It brings culture, history and religion into the picture, where strong traditions are

surrounding the phenomenon and where hijras are assimilated in both religions of Islam and Hinduism. However, it is argued in the article that since time has changed the attitude towards hijras, they have lost their sacred space in the social fabric and they are instead forced into begging for money or into prostitution.

The next point-of-focus is the hijras right to education. The reporting of the festival focuses on talent hunts amongst the hijra, where a dialogue that they are incapable does not exist (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:l); as it did in the discourse created by The Daily Star. Subsequently in Dhaka Tribune, the job situation for the hijras is discussed further, and their current means of living are explained as follows: “However, disowned by family, the state and the society, they have to do unpleasant things to make a living” (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:k). The situation is seen from the perspective of the hijras, and not from the rest of the society. It is not presented as an active choice by the hijras to use extortion or to turn to prostitution in order to earn their living. It is instead communicated as a failure by the state, the society and the family who systematically disown the hijras forcing them to use these means as a last resort to survival.

In relation to the festival, there have been examples of interviewees that bring their children out in order to make them get in contact with the hijra subculture. The parents aim was to prove to the kids that they need not to be scared of hijras, something that has been imprinted on the Bangladeshi society for a long time. The parents explained it in said report as follows: “They often get scared seeing hijras on the streets, and we brought them here to break that impression.” (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:l). These type of statements could combat subconscious ideas like this to flourish in the society of Bangladesh.

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Impression	An idea, feeling or opinion about something or someone, especially one formed without conscious thought or on the basis of little evidence	Subconscious idea

Table 17: Interpretation of ‘impression’

The word ‘impression’ is here used to explain the fear that their children feel when they are in contact with hijras. Impression is seen as a subconscious idea inherited by the acts of the society, and is not necessarily based on experience from the children themselves. The attitude towards the hijras can then be interpreted as something temporary.

There has also been a more optimistic tone from the perspective of the hijras since the legislative change. One hijra has explained it as following: “Now, at least we know there will be response when we raise our voice.” (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:l).

Subsequently, the criminal reality for some hijras was touched upon by one article, which reported on a hijra being assaulted and killed for allegations of theft. The articles on crimes involving hijras are presented differently here, than those from earlier platforms which used the reports as a warning of where hijras are locating themselves and where groups of hijras have been seen. There is another side of the coin that has not been exemplified by the other platforms; this is illustrated in the article above. A hijra is easily accused of crimes in the locality, due to their lifestyle and the norm structures in the society. Another article on the Dhaka Tribune platform reported a crime committed by a group

of hijras, where a minor was killed for the sake of Tk400. This article takes the tone of objective news reporting (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:e).

There has been further contextualization of the hijra situation in terms of them being forced into criminal activity. This issue concerns the previous registration of the hijras in order to receive national identification cards (NID). Only two genders were allowed in the registration procedure, which resulted in hijras either needed to register as male or female. However, the National Identity Registration Act (2010) states that providing false and misleading information while applying for NID is a criminal offence punishable with one year imprisonment, a fine or both. Therefore, as some hijras do not identify as either female or male or are intersexed, this meant that the information given when applying for the identification cards to enjoy the constitutional rights was fraudulent, and the system thus automatically views hijras as criminals. Their offense of not complying to either two of the mainstream genders while trying to make use of their constitutional rights were then punishable by law (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:b). This is a way for the platform to contextually discuss the problem leading up to the legislative change. The platform presents the problem from the hijra's perspective, adding to their opportunity to have a societal voice while also interviewing prominent human rights advocates, such as for instance Khushi Kabir (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:b).

### 5.3 Aspiration

This section will explore how the hijra movement's capacity to raise their voice is represented through the discourse created by the three different media platforms.

The importance lies in determining whether the stated legislative change derived only from the judicial need for one, or if further reporting on the role of the hijra movement in Bangladesh has led up to the change. Subsequently, the hijra rights movement's own capacity, and the capacity of the community it is protecting will be discussed. This is done by identifying an enhanced or unchanged capacity to aspire societal change. One possibility here is that discourse of further aspirations still need to be formed by the hijra community, and/or the movement supporting it.

#### 5.3.1 The Daily Star

The start of the discourse in 2005 expressed some aspirations in connection to India. The neighboring country of Bangladesh was first to start a movement for hijra rights, including promoting their state recognition. The progress made in India was then compared to Bangladesh, where it is said that those rights are far from being suggested or implemented in Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2005). The texts that were published before the legislative change went into effect, involved voicing the most important aspiration of all. In general terms, it was state recognition of the hijras. Hijras interviewed for the newspaper stated that: "because only two sexes are identified by the state, the Hijras are deprived of the rights to marry, own a passport, a driving license, open a bank account or apply for employment. Being recognized by the state is vital, they said, as it is related to all other rights." (The Daily Star, 2008:b). The first visible propaganda for the hijra rights movement and the struggle to achieve state recognition was visible through ads and talk shows on TV channels, and ads in major newspapers with the message: "Hijra also need separate legal recognition along with men and women..." (The Daily Star, 2011:b). This shows that aspirations of the hijra movement have been present throughout the initial discourse, and that these aspirations are connected to the recent achievement of legislative recognition as the third gender in Bangladesh.



The hijra rights movement and its aspirations have been represented on the platform of the Daily Star with an advocacy directed mainly towards the government. The government has, in media, been urged to take its responsibility and protect the hijras as one of the most neglected sections of the society. In one of the analyzed articles, several points of improvement are put forth and are directed towards the agency of the Bangladeshi government. The points include; social provisions, systems of rehabilitation, special educational systems, ensuring participation and creating awareness among common people in Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2013:b & The Daily Star, 2014:c). There are other sections where the civil society in general has been urged to include the rights of sexual minorities in their work. These articles also urge the civil society to work in solidarity with hijra community activists (The Daily Star, 2011:b). Additionally, early on in the discourse, it was also debated by one of the leading NGO's, HIV/Aids and STD alliance Bangladesh (HASAB); that few people work for the development of the hermaphrodite community (The Daily Star, 2007). This issue is further outlined when presenting the NGO's concerned with hijra rights, as these are usually organizations that are working for the rights of all sexual minorities in Bangladesh. The concern is that these platforms of NGO's are not strong enough to care for the hijra community, as it is stated that further achievements cannot be done without the cooperation of the Bangladeshi government (The Daily Star, 2008:a). The platform also shows aspirations that are grander than to include only the hijras. Instead, all the minority groups in Bangladesh are considered when striving to for a non-discriminatory Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2011:b & The Daily Star, 2014:e). After the hijras achieved their legal recognition, the law commission recommended formulation of a law to prevent discrimination. This law and the discourse of the media representation, described the proposal as all-inclusive for all minority groups in Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2014:h). This proposal includes hijra's previous aspirations voiced on the platform, although if these aspirations are what the law commission responds to, is generally not explained within the discourse.

Something that has been visible throughout the discourse is the aspiration of changing the attitude amongst the citizens of Bangladesh. The general attitude needs to be more accepting and inclusive of the hijra lifestyle and community. The traditional values seeps through every branch of the society, as even departments of the government have shown to be reluctant to assist the hijra community where it is needed (The Daily Star, 2010:a).

This part of the discourse includes a belief that the new legislative change is connected to new aspirations and a possible newfound capacity to realize these or at least voice the aspirations. Although, at the same time this part of the discourse shows a new found realization in that there is not enough efforts from the civil society movements to alone advocate for the rights of the hijras. All branches of the society are needed to cooperate, while at the same time combat the prejudices that infiltrates it all.

### **5.3.2 New Age**

The articles creating the media discourse concerning New Age's reports on the hijra situation in Bangladesh is passively formulated as strict news reporting, which reacts to events occurring in Bangladesh. Very little nuances on the hijra situation can be found. All the news reports found from the New Age platform is published after the legislative change went into effect. One aspiration of the hijra movement is visible through news reports on the processions by the hijra movement, events such as hijra pride 2014 and the anniversary of the legislative change when hijra was approved as a



third gender in Bangladesh (New Age, 2014:e; New Age, 2014:d & New Age, 2014:c). The hijra movement's voice is then presented through the manifestations done during the events and that are attracting the attentions of the locals in the local area of where the event is taking place. Another visible message is raising awareness and creating respect for gender diversity in Bangladesh. This aspiration is partly available in an article concerning the first Hijra Day ever to be observed (New Age, 2014:c), and in an article that explored the exhibition of a photo theatre (New Age, 2014:f). There are no further elaborations on what is needed in order to achieve the aspirations, as they merely mentioned that these aspirations exist in relation to the festivities that are surrounding the event of the legislative change.

What is striking in comparison to the other media platforms, is that New Age publishes very little of hijras own voice in the newspaper. There has been no direct interviewing with an actual member of the hijra community. Rather the voices that are heard belong to people that in some way have come in contact with the hijra community through their work or their artistry. Whether or not this is a direct effect of the limited search result of articles concerning the hijra situation in Bangladesh for this particular platform is difficult to determine. However, when examining the differences between the articles from the three platforms during 2014, there are obvious differences. In conclusion, the aspirations of the hijra community and the rights movement are voiced to a limited or even non-existing extent within the platform of New Age. Due to this, and the stated fact that the search results only include articles published after the legislative change got into effect; it is impossible to determine if the legislative change increased the movement's capacity to aspire. Therefore, the part of the discourse that was created by New Age represents the capacity of the hijra rights movement on a very limited scale.

### **5.3.3 Dhaka Tribune**

Before the legal recognition, the discourse showed a more scattered hijra community, with a distrust of their own ability. There were uncertain statements in the chosen articles, which were made by hijra community members themselves, such as "What can we do?" and that "There is no space for us..." (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:b). Another step for the hijra community, with regards to their aspirations before the legislative change, is the allocation of parliament seats to transgender or transsexual people (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:a). This goes along with the other quota systems that have been suggested when it comes to jobs and special education systems. In connection to this, the articles also inform the nation that it is in the best interest of the country to acknowledge the hijras and the rights of their community (Dhaka Tribune, 2013:a).

After the legal recognition and legislative change which enabled the hijras to become the official third gender in Bangladesh, there has been urges for the government to properly implement the rights that the recognition entails (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:j & Dhaka Tribune, 2014:k). Like in previous analyzed platforms, the discourse took a turn to involve anti-discriminatory measures; as the legislative change does not necessarily mean that the discrimination of this subcultural group immediately will stop. An executive director of a civil society organization stated that the hijras still do not get listed as a third gender in official documents, nor are they entitled to their inheritance under the rule of law (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:j & Dhaka Tribune, 2014:k). The hijra community also showed a sense of frustration to the legal system in Bangladesh, even after the legislative change, where one community member expressed that: "I don't understand the law but I want recognition to

live my life fully and with dignity.” Here the aspiration does not concern the possibility to be legally recognized as third gender, but to solely get to live their own life without having to turn to convoluted bureaucratic systems.

Through reporting on a photographic exhibition, the hijra community’s aspirations were communicated through the idea that Bangladesh need to change perspectives on how hijras are viewed and that they are “...normal people struggling with common problems like finding a job...” (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:g). This part of the discourse created by Dhaka Tribune connects the hijra aspiration with a more conceptualizing discussion. It is subsequently mentioned that the hijra struggle need to be represented by a more practical discussion, “based on the realities of the modern world, and not based on unbending prescriptions which have no link whatsoever with the actual picture.” (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:i). These discussions are linked with discussions on the stigmatization of being open about your sexuality in general. The discourse also connects the hijra context to the aspirations for women as the female gender. Through the norms available within the society, in the constitution and other legal texts, the female gender is merely described as the belongings of a man without a will of her own. It is in the interest of the men that are described to be protected in most legislation in Bangladesh today (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:h). Furthermore, it is voiced that this is the time to think outside the box when it comes to discriminatory legal framework (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:h). In this way, the voice of the hijra gets attached to the networks that are actively promoting the equality of people, no matter of their race, gender disability or ethnicity. The new development after the legislative change of the hijras becoming the official third gender in Bangladesh is that the voice of the hijras is one voice of many, and all ask for their voice to be heard. This is also evident from the fact that the hijra community and their rights movement, was conceptualized in 2014 within the group of LGBT, their activities and the promotion of the LGBT communities rights in general (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:c).

The concluding remarks about the discourse created by this platform, is that the aspiration of the hijra community is to receive attention to their basic needs, and in the longer run it is to create a Bangladesh that is discrimination-free for not only transgender people, but all minority groups in Bangladesh (Dhaka Tribune, 2014:b). Based on the focus of the discourse this to be achieved through an all-inclusive legislative framework for all minorities in Bangladesh where little attention is given to the hijra rights movements own agency to do this.

## **Chapter 6 – Results**

The upcoming section will further deliberate on the findings of the research in relation to previous chapters on theory and literature review. This is done by discussing the visibility, representation and aspirations separately.

The frequency of the articles published has in general been low within the three platforms; with the exception of 2014. This is the year after the legislative change, and the year with the highest visibility on all three media platforms. As can be seen in the analysis of New Age, the visibility in comparison to the total amount of articles published is very low. The hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting have only been represented by a small fraction of articles published during the timespan of one year. With regards to the frequency measure of reoccurring themes throughout the timespan of the discourse, there has been a more obvious result concerning the platform of The Daily Star. This is due to the fact that The Daily Star has engaged in reporting on the hijra issue for a longer period of

time than any other platform. This platform has, by a glimpse of the word count and the titles of the articles, moved from a discourse including the social status and lifestyle of hijra; to a more agency oriented discourse after the legislative change went into effect. A change in discourse from before- and after the legislative change went into effect was expected, and The Daily Star is the platform that more clearly illustrates this trend. There is a difference observed regarding the platform of Dhaka Tribune, which concerns the word count of the last article published in 2014. The last article included words that are mostly connected to the hijra's traditional role in Bangladesh. This is a notable difference when compared to the first article published in 2013, as the context of the most commonly used words then showed a strict focus on power structures within the society.

The comparisons in numbers of articles between the platforms indicate that the movement and community receive more visibility in The Daily Star and in Dhaka Tribune. Overall, and in comparison to the massive outflow of news reporting, the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting receives minimal visibility in their struggle. The lack of results from the New Age platform is also regarded as evidence of a meager visibility in the archive of this particular platform during the years before 2014. Even though the other platforms have resulted in a larger count of articles, the visibility is interpreted as being limited for the hijra rights movement. All in all, the results show that the discourse has somewhat changed before- and after the legislative change went into effect. The increase over time of the amount of articles on each platform up to present day indicates a slight improvement.

In relation to what has been discussed in earlier sections on theoretical framework, major changes achieved by a social movement, such as the hijra rights movement, are generally few (Crossley 2002, p. 8-9). A change could be derived from the work of a social movement in the longer run through the existence of the movement and its persistence. The general idea is though that the information of a movement needs to reach out to the public, which can be achieved by being visible in the public space such as media platforms. The result of visibility on the chosen platforms can therefore, in this regard, not be seen as the end result of persistence and struggle by the hijra rights movement. The slight increase of its visibility throughout the discourse can possibly be seen as a beginning of the end a long and persistent struggle. The dynamics of the representation of the movement will be analyzed further.

The discourse represented by The Daily Star is fragmented and non-linear, in relation to the socially oriented media theory presented in earlier sections. What is evident through the complete set of discourse is that it is tainted with contradictions and ambiguities throughout the time frame. The focus of The Daily Star's audience has been directed with different emphasis from 2005 until 2014. There is a wide variety of articles published, including many different mind sets with regards to the hijra situation. Traditional norm structures are present, which could be limiting the effects of the struggle by the hijra movement and the community it is protecting. No visible and lasting changes have throughout time been noticed within the platform of The Daily Star. The discussion on the hijra situation seemingly takes one step forwards- and two steps back. Where one article seems to be able to contribute to norm changing activities outside of traditional values and norms, the next article does not. The news reports within the Daily Star platform has been concerned with the hijra community's lack of ability to function as resources for the Bangladeshi society. Hence, a negative attitude has been presented throughout this part of the discourse. These articles are seen as enhancing the traditional values of the hijras as outcasts; as they're not presented as "ordinary" or

“normal” citizens of Bangladesh. Therefore the discourse adds to the heteronormative context prevailing in Bangladesh.

Some limited contextualization is visible concerning the larger societal and cultural issues the hijras are facing in combating the discrimination aimed at their community. This is done through discussions derived from the hijra community, where it is argued that their situation cannot only be solved by legislative and political agency. The problems run deeper than that, and it is referred both to the individual and societal levels, but also to the family functions within the society. A contradiction adding to the non-linearity of this platform exist in this regard, as the platform introduces the hijra’s own voices stating that state recognition is *the* vital part in their struggle. This is where the individual voices of hijras are being presented in the discourse. In this way, the discourse is seen as scattered with the lack of a united voice to represent the struggle of the hijras within this particular platform.

The platform of New Age is not adding to the discussion of the hijra situation with any nuance. It is representing news reporting in its simplest form of reflecting on events of the nation. The platform is not deliberating, conceptualizing or contextualizing regarding the hijra community, and cannot be said to either add to traditional values of the Bangladeshi society, nor contributing with developing discussions in contestation of the preceding normative structure in the society.

The representation of the discourse is though altered when adding the platform of Dhaka Tribune to the equation. This platform, unlike the others, presented a more focused part of the discourse. It offers conceptualizations of the terminology used, it elaborates on the prejudices within the society of Bangladesh and it is contextualizing the hijra situation in a broader context of traditional gender issues, sexuality, self-identity and the role of social constructivism. In this way, the focus of the audience has shifted to involve a more progressive and challenging attitude to the norm structure surrounding the hijra situation. This result functions in relation to one interesting idea that was presented in earlier sections of literature review, regarding the different dynamics of how a person’s self-identification can pose challenges to the heteronormative context in a society. It is in the sexualized situations, that male-bodied women and female-bodied men pose a challenge to heteronormativity (Schilt & Westbrook 2009, p. 441). Dhaka Tribune touches upon this issue by contextualizing the hijra situation more thoroughly than any other platform. Hijra has for long been the sexual minority group in Bangladesh that faces more hardship and discrimination than any other group. Hijras are on many visible levels not complying with the heteronormative context within the Bangladesh society. This has led to them being renounced not only by their families but also by their society. This problem was also introduced in the literature review when discussing transsexual group that are more advantageous than others. The group of advantageous transsexuals is the ones that are altering their bodies to take up a heterosexual role (Ekins 2005, p. 308). The hijras as we already discussed self-identifies with the wide range of gender spectra that lies between the traditional ones of female and male. Their self-identification is what is the most important in the choice of lifestyle of the hijras, which implies, in general terms, to act like a “not man” but not necessarily as a female. In a heteronormative context, such as Bangladesh, this could act as challenging on so many levels which add to the particular hardship the hijras find themselves in.

Dhaka Tribune takes a bigger academic and informative responsibility, where seemingly the aim is to focus the audience’s attention to new value systems apart from the traditional and conservative

ones. Separate from The Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune focused some of the reporting on talent hunts, and hence approached the hijra community's lack of work opportunities in the society differently. Members of the hijra community are thus conceptualized as talents and not as incapable citizens. The situation with the legislative change is also approached differently within this part of the discourse. The hijra voices that are being put forth are ones that are indicating that state recognition is one step of many in achieving recognition for the hijras. It indicates that there is still a lot more to be done, and that the responsibility is not only limited to the goodwill of the governmental institutions.

The concluding remark regarding representation is that Dhaka Tribune represents the part in the discourse that is more obviously striving to create a new reality for how hijras in Bangladesh are seen by the rest of the society. The part of the discourse created by Dhaka Tribune represents hijra community and its movement in more favorable manner than any of the other platforms. The other two platforms seemingly function within the discourse as more favorable to the traditional values, which said movement are trying to combat within all levels of the society.

The results on the section of aspiration are determined by the theoretical framework provided earlier. Here the importance lies in a focused collective voice that starts from within one particular subculture. In the case of the hijra subculture and the discourse on media representation of their aspirations, some individual voices were heard in the articles. The interviews that have been conducted have mostly been in relation to recent legislative change on all three platforms. This proves that there are ideas being voiced on an individual level within the hijra community and within the hijra rights movement. Although what is lacking in the discourse is a united voice, when individual voices become a collective. There have been events and processions described in the articles, but very little attention has been given to the organized agency behind these groups. We know from reading the articles, that these organizations exist whether or not they are advocating for hijra rights in particular or LGBT-rights in general. The media discourse is in this regard representing a scattered movement of individual voices, and on some senses; contradicting voices in comparison between the three different platforms constituting the discourse. The sense of the collective is diminished within media representation, which cuts the capacity to aspire for the hijra movement in half. The self-articulation is seen as the start of a movement's capacity to aspire further change (Appadurai 2013, p. 192). Also, in relation to the agency and power of a social movement, facilitation for both the individual and the collective is needed. Knowing a social movement we need to know about the individual. By knowing the individual we also know its reasons for creating a political agency (Castells 2009, p. 10 & Couldry 2012, p. 125). This proves the importance for a social movement to have representation of both the individual and the collective within the public sphere, something that is currently lacking in the media representation of the hijra rights movement.

After the legislative change went into effect, the law commission proposed an anti-discrimination framework that is all inclusive of all minority groups in Bangladesh. The discourse then changed to include aspirations posed by the hijra community members for the creation of a discriminatory free Bangladesh for all groups. The discourse of the three media platforms are then presenting a collective voice of aspirations, including minority groups such as social marginalized dalits, sexual minority groups and ethnic minorities such as the indigenous populations. This could have two outcomes in media discourse for the hijras. Either the hijras are receiving the attention they severely need, and their voice are enhanced by a joint force of all minority groups and their movements in

Bangladesh; or their voice will once again become unheard, as they will disappear in the masses of discriminated groups in Bangladesh. Importantly the hijra rights movement and its members have just started gaining more ground within the media discourse of the three platforms, with an enhanced contribution by Dhaka Tribune.

In addition cultural processes are needed in order to influence aspirations of a certain group that are aspiring for change. This will in turn create an agency built to change the surroundings (Rao & Walton ed. 2004, s. 4). This is where the platform of The Daily Star has its biggest contribution in providing a discourse more favorable to the hijra community and its movement. The Daily Star adds a big contribution when it comes to the reports on artistic work. The platform adds in this way to a more optimistic tone about the hijra existence in Bangladesh. The message that is being put forth of artistry and artistic creations, could be a vital part in how to create a louder voice for hijra acceptance in the society. It could also function as a tool to bridge the gap between the heteronormative society, the transgender community and its rights movements.

One concluding remark is that the legislative change has seemingly created an increased but yet limited opportunity for the voice of this movement to be stronger. As a start in the process, some individual voices are being heard and there has been hope expressed for further attention when someone from the community attempts the same. As mentioned earlier, the one representation that is missing is a stronger united voice from the rights movement of the hijras. However, this could now come to an end, if the collaboration of the minority groups creates their own all-inclusive discourse of societal change and inclusion where all minority voices gets heard. But until then, the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting is-, and has for long, been paying with their patience and persistence for a better future to come. According to the available theory of aspiration the required negotiation with the rest of the society to assist them (Appadurai 2013, p. 192-193), has just started.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusion**

As we have seen, hijras in Bangladesh are one of the most marginalized groups in the society. They have had little visibility and meager representation of their rights advocacy on the media platforms; The Daily Star, New Age and Dhaka Tribune. This representation has involved traditional values and norm structures on how to observe the life of the people that does not conform to the heteronormative context. The Daily Star is the platform that has been proven to add the most to traditional structures and values. New Age seemingly has little impact in shaping the reality, as it is merely a reflection of what is going on in the society without little contextualization of the issue at large. Lastly, Dhaka Tribune is the platform that has been contributing the most to the developing of how the Bangladeshi society and the audience of the platforms view the subculture of the hijras. It has proven to combine the representation of the hijra situation with a lens for the audience of norms changing discussions and a progressive attitude.

Even though the discourse studied encompassed the start of 2005 until the end of 2014, the visibility of the hijra rights movement has been scarce on the media platforms. Individual hijra voices and agents working for their rights have been present, however there has been little attention given to the agency and advocacy of the collective. This has not changed after the legislative change went into effect. The biggest change has instead been the presentation and discussion of an all-inclusive anti-discrimination law. The hijra voices are then not singled out, but are instead included in a



collective of voices of all minority groups. This could constitute a progress for the hijra rights movement within the public sphere, or it could mean that the hijra situation becomes yet again invisible. There have been hopeful expressions that, because of the legislative change, the voice of the hijra rights movement and the hijra community will be heard. However at the same time, the articles dealing with the hijra situation started to progressively include other discriminatory structures in Bangladesh, whilst moving away from solely representing the hijra situation.

What can be said about the discourse analyzed in this thesis is that the hijra rights movement gains from the part of the discourse that Dhaka Tribune represents; while traditional norms structures are still somewhat gaining ground based on the part of the discourse that is created by The Daily Star. The hijra community and the hijra rights movement have been- and still are paying with their patience in the hope for a better tomorrow.

## **Chapter 8 – Reflections and recommendations by the researcher**

As my passion for this topic succeeds my timely ability to continue its research, there are many thoughts that have come to mind about future studies. The upcoming section will attempt to outline these together with thoughts on what could have been done differently in this thesis.

There is an existing significance in involving the hijra rights movement themselves in research such as this one. The initial suggestion for my research was to combine discourse analysis with qualitative interviews of actors within the hijra rights movement in Bangladesh. Due to time constraints, and limited access to the movement, this part of the research got altered. In hindsight, this would be the preferable option in order to gain understanding and knowledge about the hijra rights movement's position and relation to different media platforms in Bangladesh. Further studies on the strategies and practical aspirations of this movement are of course also of relevance for future research missions. Seemingly, the movement is lacking an available digital organization based on limited resources online concerning the hijra rights movement. Some information on this is available by including the hijra situation within the LGBT acronym and the general LGBT platforms online. But more insight in the structure of this particular movement is needed, which could be generated through qualitative interviews with both agents working for the community, but also members within it.

Further investigation of the media's actual role within the Bangladeshi society could also be an interesting continuation departing from this research. The results become generally hypothetical without an actual survey result on how the audience is receiving the news published on these platforms. To do this a concrete selection of target groups is needed that are representing the different platforms. This interest is derived from a perceived difference between the different platforms included in the analysis and result of this thesis.

Furthermore, the artistic expressions of the hijra rights movement and the community it is protecting would be something worthwhile to investigate further. This is the one part of the discourse that stood out as completely separated from the traditional norms and values available within the media discourse. Moreover, photographic exhibitions, creation of cartoons, movies, and theatres might play an invaluable role in getting the society in Bangladesh more accustomed to hijra life and existence.

When conducting this research, plenty more thoughts, reflections and ideas have come to mind throughout the process. The discussions in this chapter represent only a selection of the few that I, the researcher, think could generate good starting points for research in relation to the chosen topic of hijra and media representation in Bangladesh.



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