

We live in the same world: A corpus-based study investigated through “transgender”

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the term “transgender” as it is used and described in news articles from online sources specifically the online news websites and supporting organization websites. It employs the Critical Discourse Analysis framework and corpus linguistic technique to analyze the frequencies with which the term “transgender” is used in their articles. It is found that the term “transgender” collocates with the terms culture, class, race, politics, gender inequality, discrimination, and human rights. Moreover, “transgender” is identified with women rather than with men, and the term “transgender woman” appear in the texts more frequently than “transgender man”. Certain social issues and concept such as transgendered youth, identity confusion, crimes and abuses also surfaced as important terms that relates with the term “transgender.”

1. Introduction

Communication processes are essentially governed by certain social constructs, with which the interaction and the flow of information are controlled mainly by the roles and statuses held by the communicator at the time that the communication takes place. Sex and gender are some of the constructs that are considered important as it demonstrates the quality of the communication that takes place at a certain time. Sex is classified as a physical construct that is signaled by bodily cues such as appearance or the tone of voice. Gender on the other hand is a socially created construct in which a person assigned himself and is usually manifested by his actions, interactions and relationships with others (Wood, 2011). In this juncture, sex and gender help in organizing and structuring relationships. The family then is the usual place in which the layering of sex, gender and relationships are explored. The expectations in roles and statuses are conventionally distinguished among members in the family. As White and Kelin (2002) emphasize gender differentiation begins with families.

But for transgendered people, engaging in a gender-sensitive communication may pose certain concerns. As they do not fit well with the social conventions of being *male* or *female*, transgender may find the flow of communication difficult and challenging since they don’t know how to place themselves in the communication process in as much as how the other person should regard them. As a consequence, transgender persons may experience some discomfort in their social dealings thus they may develop intentions of altering some parts of their personality by deliberately changing themselves physically, or communicatively in order to signal shifts in terms of their sex, gender or both. However, this transition does not always lead to happy endings since transforming into this identity could potentially create uncertainty and frustration among them.

But the term transgender becomes more familiar nowadays, and has been used extensively in media in the past years. As shown in the table below, there is a pertinent increase in time of usage of the term, transgender in media communication.

Table 1 Transgender from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

SECTION	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2012
FREQ	3	16	46	189	124
PER MIL	0.03	0.15	0.45	1.85	2.39
SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE					

Table 1 shows that between the years 1990-1994 and 2010-2012 there has been a significant increase in the use of the term transgender as reported by the Corpus of Contemporary American English. This signifies that there is a growing awareness of the term transgender, and the member of its people as well as an acceptance that once used in contemporary literature or media articles, transgender is recognized and understood.

Table 2 The table, Transgender, from Google Book Ngram Viewer

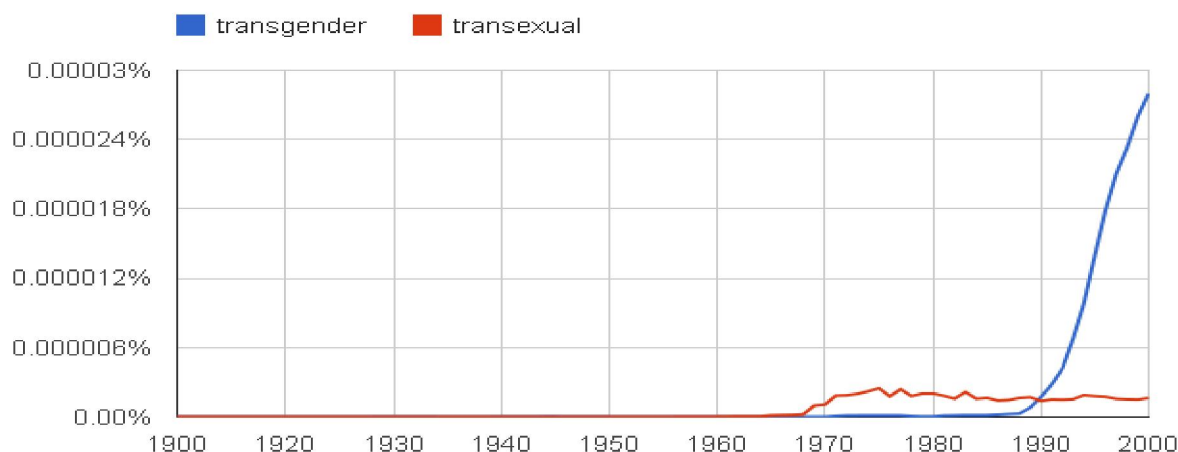


Table 2 on the other hand shows that when it comes to the terms transgender and transsexual, there has been a significant difference between its awareness and recognition. Taken from Google Book Ngram Viewer, the term transsexual has not gained much popularity and acceptance throughout the years compared to the term transgender which has spurred up its use in media communication drastically high at the turn of the century.

2. Purpose of the study

The objective of this study is to employ a corpus-based approach and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the term *transgender* from online media. In particular, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the term, transgender, and its meaning when it is represented in different media contexts.
2. To describe the roles and statuses of transgender in the social contexts.

2.1 Terminologies

In this study, the following terms have been defined to promote better understanding:

Transgender refers to a person's gender identity, but is not matched with one's assigned sex.

Transsexual refers to a person's gender identity, but is not matched with one's assigned sex. They may choose to live as the other sex.

Gay is a person who has the sexual orientation (desire) toward the same gender.

Queer identifies with all LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex).

Transvestite/Drag is a person who occasionally dresses as his/her opposite sex.

Intersexed people is a person born with sexual organ ambiguity.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the study of the relationship between discourse, power, and social inequality in terms of the communication process.

Corpus is the study of language as indicated and expressed in 'real life' usage of terms usually taken from computerized databases created for linguistic research.

Concordance refers to the index of words in corpus texts that shows every contextual occurrence of a word.

3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies the relations among discourse, power, and social inequality. It is a matter of interpretation to locate where the position of the discourse analyst is in such social relationships. It is however, a complex process, and it criticizes social inequality, focusing on the role of discourse and challenge of dominance. It discusses such issues as political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality. It is crucial in understanding the actual power and dominance relations in the society.

CDA deals primarily with the discourse in power abuse, injustice, and inequality. It is interested and motivated by pressing social issues, in the hopes to create better understanding through discourse analysis. By using CDA to criticize discourse, the results are real problems that are somehow threatening the lives of the people. Critical discourse scholars continuously want to make a more specific contribution to the field by getting more insight into the crucial role of discourse in social concerns (Fairclough, 2010).

4. Methodology and corpus design

In the realm of comparative study, the usage of the term, transgender, has been thoroughly looked upon and analyzed in the online media. The corpus was made up of 50 representative samples of news related with transgender which were purposively selected from six news web sites.

To access the corpus, concordance software such as AntConc, was used in this study. AntConc is a freeware concordance program which serves as a comprehensive text analysis mainly used by researchers. This tool is commonly applied in Corpus Linguistics research. Frequency lists show how often an individual word appears in a corpus of data, highlighting common patterns in specific lexemes and concepts within the data. The researcher applied the CDA framework to analyze and understand the findings. The CDA was chosen in order to frame the investigation in the gender arena of social inequality. Using a CDA paradigm and corpus linguistics techniques, the data will be looked upon for their frequencies or words/phrases used, collocates of important concepts, such as gender, and an analysis based on concordances line results of relevant words.

The following news websites were used because they are well-known and generally represent global news. They also tend to have large and diverse audiences. There were 25 online news articles (126 concordances) from the following news web sites:

1. <http://www.foxnews.com>
2. <http://usnews.nbcnews.com>
3. <http://abcnews.go.com>

The following supporting organizations web sites were then chosen because among transgender persons, they are quite popular and gained large audience following from all genders. There were 25 online news articles (112 concordances) from the following supporting organizations web sites:

1. <http://www.out.com>
2. <http://www.advocate.com>
3. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/transgender/>

The researcher gathered and used data from the above mentioned web sites which posted news from January 2012 – February 2013. The inclusive dates were chosen because of the following reasons: (1) the term, transgender, is quite new and only exists in the news in recent years (referred to Table 1); (2) the term, transgender is a current trend thus identifying how people use it and its meaning in different context is currently within this time frame; (3) having to include a shorter period will not justify the information gathered for this research study since there will be less corpus and less information to investigate and to analyze.

The scope of the study is only limited to online sources since it is the primary aim of the study to identify the usage of the term transgender in online media. This is in differentiation with more common terms such as queer, transsexual, drag among others. The definitions of these terms are found in *Terminologies Section*.

5. Data analysis and discussion

Data from the corpus revealed that the term, transgender is identified more with woman rather than with men. It shows that transgender fits well on its description towards female identity than the male identity. Transgender is categorically defined as a person's gender identity, which is not matched with his or her assigned sex. As the data show, most of the time readers see "transgender woman" or "transgender women," instead of "transgender man." The following concordances showed the terms, transgender woman/women are being used in the news and they appeared on both the news web sites and supporting organizations web sites.

Concordances for "Transgender woman/women," from supporting organizations web sites.

4	Being the first African-American transgender	woman to produce and star in her own television s
5	heels of making history by being the first black, transgender	woman to appear on a reality television program,
12	parture on September 17." Last year, a Guatemalan transgender	woman named Joselyn was buried alive before fleei
15	Chrysalis Lingerie, a lingerie company devoted to transgender	women, is aiming to do just that. Since 2010, Chr
16	and underwear that cater to the specific needs of transgender	women. The underwear is designed to lift, tuck an
18	e, I found no products that specifically cater to transgender	women. There are some things for cross-dressers a
58	than her hometown. wenzel, 26, will be the first transgender	woman allowed to compete in a Miss Universe organ
75	ry in October 2011 when she competed as the first transgender	woman in a bodybuilding contest in San Diego. Sin
81	east D.C. An arrest has yet to be made. Each day, transgender	women of color, like Camila and Lashai, are tragi
83	we wait for a change to come? How long must other transgender	women of color, like myself, be subjected to the
88	al Coalition of Anti-violence Programs found that transgender	women constituted 44 percent of LGBT hate crime v
89	nd Lashai -- were 70 percent of the victims. As a transgender	woman of color, I know all too well the violence,
91	and fear of living your life as an out and proud transgender	woman of color. To face discrimination and biased
104	ngfully contribute to society. I've seen it. As a transgender	woman, as an immigrant, as a person of color I ca

Concordances for “Transgender woman/women,” from news web sites.

3	nd Franklin streets, a common gathering place for transgender	women who feel unwelcome at bars and clubs nearby
5	e. Woods runs Transvision, a resource program for transgender	women at the Tri-City Health Center. Martell work
6	en the clinic's funding was cut, Woods said. Many transgender	women who gather in the area of downtown Oakland
9	have named the 18-year-old charged with beating a transgender	woman at Rosedale McDonald's, amid demands from s
13	gender identity. Founded after the 1998 murder of transgender	woman Rita Hester in Massachusetts, the day now h
17	e - one of them the fatal shooting of 23-year-old transgender	woman Myles McLean. "I look forward to the day th
24	ansgender people in Africa, she cited examples of transgender	women across the continent being beaten and impri
27	s October to change the gender and forenames of a transgender	woman. Yet people awaiting gender-reassignment su
29	tence. McDonald is a 23-year-old African American transgender	woman who, like me, grew up on the south side of
50	A Dallas transgender	woman was issued a ticket for using the women's r
74	odbye to her old self - her male self. Cynthia, a transgender	woman, was born John Jay Tebbetts. John spent mos
83	e tells them. During one visit, she came across a transgender	woman who had made the trip alone. The woman had
84	ndmark decision. About a week later, a New Jersey transgender	woman successfully appeals a decision by her heal
125	e for Joseph Lamar, a man suspected of shooting a transgender	woman and a man in what authorities believe could
126	e. On Jan. 8, someone shot an unnamed 22-year-old transgender	woman and a 19-year-old man. According to ABC 7,

The above shown concordances revealed a pattern for analysis. Sometimes, the term transgender appeared to be used as an adjective to refer to a transgender woman. Lines 4, 5, and 12 in the concordances for transgender woman/woman from supporting organizations websites featured collocated words identifying transgender woman such as African-American transgender woman, black transgender woman, and Guatemalan transgender woman. While concordances taken from news websites show the terms African-American transgender woman, Dallas transgender woman, and New Jersey transgender woman which could be gleaned from lines 29, 50 and 84. This shows that term transgender is generally used as a generic term to refer to people with transgender characteristics but normally is accompanied by a description into which the person socially or geographically belongs.

Concordances from new websites, transgender and their identities.

37	ness, more understanding and more acceptance that transgender	people have been, are and always will be a part o
38	r communities. In some cultures throughout world, transgender	people are considered unique individuals with ver
41	e gender's clothing on occasion. Except that for transgender	individuals, it's not about the costume or outfit
45	The decision to allow a transgender	45-year-old college student who identifies as a w
49	he punk band Against Me!, told Rolling Stone he's transgender	and plans to start living as a woman, Laura Jane
55	is transgender. A word often used to describe the transgender	experience is "transition." Transgender people ar
59	ea began to slowly develop a vocabulary about his transgender	experience. "I knew bits and pieces of my gender,
60	to better represent his identity. (Mea, like many transgender	people, is private about his birth name and doesn
69	his marks a historic milestone for people who are transgender	and gender non-conforming, as their identities ar
94	f masculinity or femininity," advocates hope that transgender	people -- those who identify with a sex other th
97	provide health benefits that address the needs of transgender	individuals. In addition to surgery to reconstruc
110	nternational issue The way that countries address transgender	identification issues varies widely around the wo

From news web sites, there were three issues that have been found to be related with the term transgender. These are the identity, youth, and crimes/abuses. The concordance shown above show the discourse of the self as social entity which came through when transgender wants the world to see them as who they are and not what they are born with. Mason-Schrock (1996) reported transgender persons trying to live their lives normally and fit-in in the society. They want people to accept them and recognize them as a part of the whole society. Through the difficulties of trying to have a life, many of them have difficult times and issues to deal with during their “transitions.”

Moreover, in line 38, transgender is described as “unique individual”; line 69 describes them as “gender non-conforming”; and in line 94, they are referred to as having “masculinity or femininity” characteristics. This pattern suggests that transgender are often described in terms of their differences. They have been excluded from the society and are not accepted as one gender to compare with men and women.

From these concordances, it can be described that words and phrases such as “unique”, “understanding”, “acceptance”, “identify”, and “be a part of” often surface. It is notable that most of the transgender persons tried very hard to go through their transitions to look more like the gender that they desired to have with the help of surgery and reconstructions. Although it is not an easy task, transgender persons feel that they want to do such a change not because of other people, but for themselves. Most of transgender want to be accepted and independent. Some places hence welcome them and accept the truth that transgender are part of the society, as mentioned in line 37.

*But federal protections alone aren't going to create safer, fairer, more equitable situations for transgender people. It'll only come from more awareness, more understanding and more acceptance that **transgender** people have been, are and always will be a part of our communities. In some cultures throughout world, transgender people are considered unique individuals with very special roles as caregivers, shamans and medicine women and men.*

Transgender youth is one emerging part of the transgender community. In the following analysis, the situation of transgender youth are described and evaluated as reflected in the given concordances.

Concordances from news websites, youth transgender.

7 p-flopped on its refusal to allow a prepubescent, transgender boy to join its ranks. The leader of a Girl Scout
8 iously told KUSA-TV, "our requests for support of transgender kids have grown, and Girl Scouts of Colorado is w
10 e or so." Since her 1930s childhood, the lives of transgender people have improved dramatically in many countri
29 tence. McDonald is a 23-year-old African American transgender woman who, like me, grew up on the south side of
34 n within the trans community, like passing – some transgender girls don't respect if you don't pass. You should
39 arts-based leadership development curriculum for transgender youth of color and writing a full-length play ins
40 tially missed this story, "Becoming Katie." For a transgender teen article to make the news might not be consid
46 riday, warning it that the decision to allow the transgender student to continue using the locker room could p
58 suicide prevention for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. Mea and I attended Medomak Valley High Sch
68 is safe Schools Alliance, said efforts to protect transgender students will continue. Her group released a stat
106 able to deny coverage on that basis. But for some transgender people, such as Nakoa Nelson, a full-time student

The concordances above describe transgender youth as having a hard time adjusting themselves through schools. The news talked about adjustments, development, and attention usually expressed by transgender kids. They are observed to have experienced confusion and frustrations in dealing with school matters especially when it comes to creating relationship with other kids in school.

This pattern of concordances showed transgender kids as weaklings who are in constant need of help. They are described as having emotional troubles due to the lack of support from significant people and the disallowance to do things their way. Therefore, this pattern suggests that transgender are the subject of help in some ways. From concordances, it showed that many of them go through painful adjustments through their childhood. Some of them however, braved through discrimination and are very direct and frank to say who they are. In line 40, the story of Katie, a transgender teen in Dallas, Texas, was published on a front page of a local daily. She shared her experience as being a transgender kid, and not as drag who only dresses up occasionally. Amusingly, Katie acted for real and went after what she wanted to pursue. It was an incredible story in the real world.

“Becoming Katie.” For a transgender teen article to make the news might not be considered that big a deal, but what makes it unique is that it is a front page article appearing in, of all places, Tulsa, Oklahoma!: Except that for transgender individuals, it’s not about the costume or outfit. They genuinely feel like the gender they’re born into simply doesn’t fit. Kudos to the Tulsa World for publishing this uplifting story and educating the public on transgender issues.

Having these difficulties, transgender people also experience daunting situations by other people physically abusing or discriminating them. The concordances shown below identify the specific untoward incidences that a transgender may go through.

Concordance from news websites, crimes, abuses, prejudice and discrimination against transgender.

1		Friends of a transgender woman who was shot and killed over the weekend in
2	Before she was shot, Martell was with three other transgender women in the area of 13th and Franklin streets, a	
9	have named the 18-year-old charged with beating a transgender woman at Rosedale McDonald's, amid demands from s	
11	ut discrimination remains widespread. Hundreds of transgender people are killed every year and many live in con	
14	following. In the first nine months of 2011, 116 transgender people were murdered globally, according to Trans	
16	lines this year after a series of attacks against transgender people - one of them the fatal shooting of 23-yea	
17	e - one of them the fatal shooting of 23-year-old transgender woman Myles McLean. "I look forward to the day th	
19	l illnesses. LATIN AMERICA Most of the murders of transgender people TMM recorded this year occurred in Latin A	
20	e crimes against lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people are on the rise around the world. "Transge	
24	ansgender people in Africa, she cited examples of transgender women across the continent being beaten and impri	
25	vist as saying that doctors often refuse to treat transgender people and even sometimes tip off police, leading	
52	journey filled with pain and joy. People who are transgender are often classified as being born into the wrong	
63	20, activists around the globe pause to honor the transgender lives lost to violence, hate, and prejudice. Tran	
64	nder lives lost to violence, hate, and prejudice. Transgender Day of Remembrance was established in 1999 to me	
65	olved, as do many of the crimes committed against transgender and gender-nonconforming people. According to TDO	
66	at was working on antidiscrimination policies for transgender students, "effectively ending that effort," windy	
67	this fall, after the board in October approved a transgender rights policy and then within days revoked it in	
93	g sex discrimination in health insurance apply to transgender people. With HHS declaring that it would be discr	
113	penalties, to harass or attack someone for being transgender. Bec Collins was born female and said as a trans	
122	Transgender crime in Devon and Cornwall 'taken seriously' A s	
123	lice force is starting to take hate crime against transgender people seriously. Emily Dodge from Kernow Katz sa	
125	g for Joseph Lamar, a man suspected of shooting a transgender woman and a man in what authorities believe could	

Looking through these concordances, it could be observed that that attacks against transgender people happened a lot these days. The expressions with words such as beating, violence, and harass appear many times in the articles. Many incidences even resulted in injury or death. In this case, transgender are constructed as “victims” like a minority.

In a 2008 paper on transgender people in Africa, she cited examples of transgender women across the continent being beaten and imprisoned. "Most African countries still have some form of legal action, legislation and laws against homosexuality and sodomy (which includes all forms of being a trans person)"

Examining these concordance lines, it could hardly be seen that good news came out from what happened with these transgender people. News usually reported abusive behaviors, criminals, and prejudice/discrimination against transgender. Strikingly, crimes and robbery happened every day, but when it comes to transgender, reporters often linked it with the issues of hate crimes, prejudice and discrimination, even some incidents may not be related with these issues at all.

However, news from supporting organization websites poses a different take on transgender and their current situations. They report more about human right and equality among transgender.

Concordance from supporting organizations websites, human rights and equality of transgender.

3 lopment worker, wants to help raise awareness for Transgender and Transsexual issues in the local region as well
30 o have a creative gender identity and expression. Transgender people are not allowed the freedom to do things e
31 , go to school, get a job, and even make friends. Transgender kids like me are not allowed to go to most school
32 they will talk with the other kids' parents, and transgender kids are kept secret or told not to come there an
33 ere anymore. Kids are told not to be friends with transgender kids, which makes us very lonely and sad. When th
34 makes us very lonely and sad. When they grow up, transgender adults have a hard time getting a job because the
35 ll be scared away. Doctors are afraid of treating transgender patients because they don't know how to take care
37 It would be a better world if everyone knew that transgender people have the same hopes and dreams as everyone
38 we like to make friends and want to go to school. Transgender people want to get good jobs and go to doctors li
39 actly the same. It really isn't that hard to like transgender people because we are like everyone else." sadie
41 And after announcing her candidacy for Congress, transgender activist Valentina Verbal hopes to break another
48 unexpected choice for an LGBT advocate. However, transgender rights, verbal argues, can just as easily be addr
58 than her hometown. Wenzel, 26, will be the first transgender woman allowed to compete in a Miss Universe Organ
64 told USA Today she hoped to set "an example" for transgender youth. "If they see me as a normal person and we
75 ry in October 2011 when she competed as the first transgender woman in a bodybuilding contest in San Diego. sin
77 n that seeks increased awareness and equality for transgender people. Bruce was also recently featured on Nati
85 nd Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality, the impact of anti-transgender bias can
86 nter for Transgender Equality, the impact of anti-transgender bias can lead to insurmountable challenges and de
91 and fear of living your life as an out and proud transgender woman of color. To face discrimination and biased
98 ion, be sure to check out the National Center for Transgender Equality's "know your rights" resource regarding
107 e of the discrimination our community faces, many transgender people end up working in the street economy out o
108 res as "Melisa," and became the city's first ever transgender teacher. weeks earlier he had met with school a

The supporting organizations websites identify two issues related with the term, transgender. These are the "human rights/equality" and "well-known transgender". In some cases, these types of qualification suggest that transgender stay together as groups and fight for their rights. In the example below (an expansion of line 98), they tend to be very active and pass along rights and equality among transgender communities.

*After you read the Voice to Voice conversation, be sure to check out the National Center for **Transgender Equality's** "Know Your Rights" resource regarding the PREA standards and how they relate to LGBT people.*

Some of the attempts of transgender activist wanted to put an end to the discrimination against transgender people (line 41).

*Last July, the country passed its first anti-discrimination legislation in response to an anti-gay murder in Santiago. Later in the year, Chile elected its first openly gay politician, a municipal councilman. And after announcing her candidacy for Congress, **transgender** activist Valentina Verbal hopes to break another glass ceiling. If she wins the election she'll be South America's first transgender legislator.*

Famous transgender plays a significant role in uplifting the rights of the transgender people as reflected in the concordance below. Here, transgender who are celebrities and public figure are given due recognition for their contribution in the society.

seemed to be getting larger in number and grow up in the society where people have to deal with them with decorum and respectability. However, this does not prevent the occurrence of crimes and abuses that happen among transgender people. Issues like prejudice and discrimination headlined the news presented on these online news web sites.

On the other hand, supporting organization websites presented information about transgender in different light. There are more notable positive statements on transgender individuals mentioned in these websites than in online news sources. Issues on transgender are discussed more on the basis of its equality in the society along with the other forms of gender identities such as transsexuals, drag and gays among others. These websites even provided examples of well-known transgender who have shown great successes in their respective careers. They are projected there as smart, easy-going and talented individuals.

Hence, it is noteworthy to state that transgender as described and projected in both the online news websites and supporting organization websites are shown in two different ways. Although there are some overlapping information observed from all the six web sites but majority of the news articles presented in online news sources portrayed transgender in a more negative manner. This provides readers new perspectives in looking at the news from the online news web site and online news from supporting organization websites.

6. Conclusion

This research study tackles on the usage of the term, transgender in online news articles, and supporting organizations web sites. It is shown that by using Critical Discourse Analysis, issues such as the usage of terms could be identified and categorized. However, it should be noted that investigations made in this study is just but preliminary as this can be strengthened further by adding depth to the investigation including additional searches of concordance lines. But as the results show understanding the usage of the term, transgender, manifests clear interpretations and implications as to how the term is used as of the moment specifically in the online media communication. Nonetheless, this study is a matter of interpretation where it showed relations among power and social inequality, and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships. Regardless of sex and gender, everyone wants to live happy and be a part of the society, with the same rights as all human beings.

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