



Women and media: A critical review

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Abstract

In today's interrelated world, media plays a crucial role in shaping our perceptions, beliefs and values. However, the portrayal of women in the media is constantly under scrutiny and criticism. This review examines the relationship between women and the media, examining the image, impact and challenges women face in various forms of media. It is believed that women are free from the clutches of men and empowered completely but in fact they are not completely empowered. In this male dominated patriarchal society, the status of the women are still inferior to men. They always try to stereotype the image of women. The main purpose of this research paper is to focus upon the role of women in mass media; how women have contributed towards the progression of media within the country. Research has illustrated that in the present existence; women have rendered and are rendering a very significant contribution towards the development of media. The main areas that have been highlighted in this research paper are, portrayal of women by the media, the image of women in mass media, significance of women and media, the influence of media on the views of gender, and stereotypes of girls and women in the media. There has been a significant participation of women in the media, despite the fact that they are subjected to crime and violence. In most cases, amongst the socio-economically backward sections of the society, women are mistreated, exploited and abused. Domestic violence, rape, murder, sexual harassment and intimidation have been some of the criminal acts that are prevalent against women and prove to be barriers during the course of their development. Moreover, women's images are projected and portrayed negatively by the media also. Her real life experience is rarely portrayed in media but it is exaggerated in all the fields. This research paper also provide some suggestions to curb violence against women.

Keywords: Women, media, image, social media, stereotype, violence

Introduction

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing" - Swami Vivekananda

It is rightly said by Swami Vivekananda as women population is 49.58% of world population. And in 2021 Gender ratio in the world is 101.68 males per 100 females. If half of the world population is suffering from exploitation and inferior situation in almost all field of their lives, then there is no chance of welfare of the whole world. Although, Men need the support of women at every stage of life, But in this man dominated society women don't get the respect they deserve. The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Although the main goal of women's empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women, it also has a profound impact on the social, economic and political situation. Through its reach to public at large, the media has been instrumental in giving the women's empowerment movement the desired degree of support by highlighting the neglect and marginalization of women's place in society (Ray, n.d.).

The Government, judiciary and social action groups are taking positive action to provide women true dignity in economic, social and personal areas. In this venture the mass media have a pivotal role by reporting wrong doing following up remedial action, mobilizing public opinion, bringing about social change and highlighting positive developments. The contents of mass communications reflect the standard of value and attitude towards women in any society.

It is to be noted down that development of women's education and their access into service and job has contributed to the augmentation of media. In all subjects of life whether for controlling of population growth, spread of literacy or improving excellence of life for the public at large, welfare of the community, family planning, women have a central role to play.

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There are few points under scrutiny regarding media and their role related to women situation. These are:

Representation of women

The media has long been criticized for perpetuating stereotype and limited representations of women. Women are often portrayed as objects of desire, only emphasis on their physical appearance rather than their abilities or accomplishments. In addition women from marginalized communities are often misrepresented in media, further perpetuating societal stereotypes and prejudices.

Gender roles and stereotypes

The media play an important role in shaping and reinforcing gender roles in society. Women are often portrayed in traditional roles such as caregivers while men are often portrayed as leaders, decision makers or action oriented individuals. These representations help normalize gender inequalities and limit women's opportunities for self-determination and self-expression. These stereotypes can be unconstructive, preventive and demeaning and impact both how women recognize themselves and how others perceive them within the community. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is substantiated by the malfunction to eradicate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private, neighboring, nationwide and worldwide media associations (Sharma, n.d.). In order to curb Stereotype beliefs against women, they should be provided enough room that they could share what they believe without fear of judgment (Stereotypes of Girls and Women in the Media, 2014) [8].

Body image and beauty standards

The media's obsession with narrow beauty standards has profound effects on women's self-esteem. Unrealistic ideals of beauty, often reinforced by digitally altered images, put enormous pressure on women to conform to unattainable standards. This can lead to low-esteem, body dissatisfaction and even harmful behaviors like eating disorders and these negatively affect societal attitudes and perceptions.

Representation and diversity

Representation and diversity are key aspects of media that often fail women. Women of all backgrounds, including women of color and women with disabilities are often underrepresented or portrayed in limited and stereotyped ways. This not only perpetuates inequality but also reduces opportunities for marginalized women and also hamper social progress.

It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misbehaviors against women but in a very restrained manner, it also enabled the stereotyped image of women as just house ladies and as unimportant persons in the traditional value system. Generally, the problems faced by women are never depicted by the media as the main story, unless it is an extremely severe case of a horrific murder or of rape. Articles and papers that are written concerning women, normally do not take into consideration the pertinent issues for women empowerment, though this point is not a complete fact, there have been articles and papers written by researchers and other individuals who have emphasized upon crime against women, domestic violence, rape, murder, sexual harassment at the workplace, acid attacks upon women and so forth (Ray, n.d.).

The illustration of women in the media has always been manipulative and unequal. It has, all through the years, caused a decline in the position of the women to being nothing more than objects to be won, prizes to be displayed, and playthings to be abused, in rural areas and in most cases, amongst the socio-economically backward sections of the society, women are mostly not treated with respect and courtesy, they are abused, mistreated, exploited, experience domestic violence, they are deprived of education and are not even allowed to see their children, in some cases, children are kept away from their mothers, therefore, there are number of ways through which women are exploited and

are mistreated against. It has also generated an explanation of splendor that women compare them selves to. In some of the instances, when a woman is not well educated, then she is not given recognition within the society, or when she is well educated and is unable to find a job, then she feels deprived and withdrawn from the society. Both the self and society has experienced huge amount of sufferings because of the objectification, prejudice, mistreatment and evaluation (Berberick, 2010) [1].

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The image of women in mass media

Research on women and mass media has focused mainly on the interpretation of the practices and the operations carried out in various mass media and various forms of messages publicized by the mass media. Content examination is the most frequently used tactic in the study of media images of women. How women are characterized in radio, television, the press, and film, as essayed in the research studies regarding the image of women in mass media. Because promotion and publicity is considered predominantly significant in forming representations of women tasked in the media, which are cost-effectively dependent on its sustenance, research results affecting to sex-role

representation in advertisements will be considered as another area (Ceulemans & Fauconnier, 1979) [3].

In India, it has been observed that in the present world as well as in the past, women are undoubtedly subject to violent and criminal acts such as child marriage, domestic violence, abuse, rape, murder, sexual harassment and so forth. When these problems against women began to assume a major form, which proved to be disadvantageous for the development of the country, then there were formulation of laws and rules for combating crime against women, but it has been observed that despite of the rules still there is prevalence of criminal acts and violence against women. On the other hand, there are women who are contributing an effective role in mass media such as they participate in the advertisement of goods and services, they are obtaining high educational qualifications in the fields of arts, science, technology, medical, vocational and so forth. Women are engaged into professions such as doctors, lawyers, administrators, teachers, managers, trainers, counselors, entrepreneurs, athletes, sports persons etc. and are contributing towards the welfare of the community. In films, television programs and radio broadcasting, women are participating and are acquiring jobs; they have become achievement oriented with the impact of globalization, advancement of technology and significance of education.

Significance of women and media

During the past decade, progress in information technology have made possible a global communications network that exceeds national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private approaches and activities, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the prospective exists for the media to make a distant better involvement towards the development of women. More women are obtaining business and jobs in the communications sector, but few have acquired arrangements at the administrative level or provide on governing boards and bodies that influence media rules. In films, radio and television programs, women are employed and they are playing the lead role, women are participating in the advertisements of the products and services, women are attaining higher educational qualifications and are assuming different professional roles such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, administrators, managers, entrepreneurs and so forth.

The persisting projection of unconstructive and demeaning representations of women in media communications, electronic, print, visual and audio, must be modified. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's varied lives and involvements to society in the varying world. In addition, aggressive and undignified or pornographic media products are also pessimistically influencing women and their contribution in

society. Indoctrination that supports women's conventional roles can be regularly restraining. The world- wide development towards consumerism has formed an environment in which commercials, memorandums, communications and messages often depict women principally as customers and target girls and women of all age groups in an inappropriate manner (Sharma, n.d.).

Electronic media

Women are seen as inferior to men in all areas, including electronic media. God's own creation of woman is beautiful and physiologically attractive. Therefore, they are misused in many cases such as commercial products and entertainment products. The women are portrayed as sexy products, models, etc. in media. Over time, the use of women for entertainment increased day by day. But in recent years exploitation and exaggeration have increased in leap and bound.

Women journalist in media

In such a rapidly changing environment, women in media have a large responsibility in not only changing attitude towards women but also shaping public opinion. An investigating journalist of a leading daily newspaper proved in December' 98 that women were sold in Andhra Pradesh. The heinous act of female infanticide was brought out only through the press. Dowry deaths moved from the confines of the home to the front page. These incidents highlight two major points. One that women are still treated only as commodities that can be sold and bought and thrown away if unwanted a reflection of the discrimination and indignity that women suffer in various parts of the country. Second, it highlights the role of media in making it public, however only a few sensational issues are flashed in the newspaper. Normally, it is lamented place in the newspaper. A few newspapers carry women's page which is again the beauty tips, recipes and fashion syndromes.

Social media and women

Today's era is the era of social media, whose presence and active engagement have spread women's empowerment ideologies quickly and widely. Social media accelerate the process of social change that has supported women's empowerment in various aspects, such as mobilizing the global community's attention to women's rights, as well as challenges and stereotypes around the world. Social media, through blogs, discussion forums, the online campaign, and online communities, have provided a platform for discussion of issues and challenges facing women that are not typically broadcast or promoted by mainstream media.

Curbing violence against women

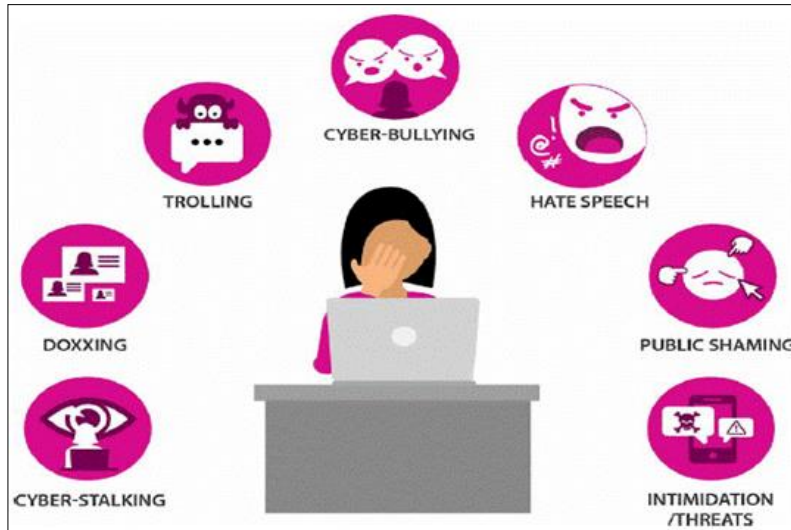


Fig 1

- Internet and social media can make possible the activists and others to challenge myths and stereotypes as well as create new forums for the perpetuation of violence against women.
- Social media is a powerful platform to discuss and share views, experiences to channelize hashtag movements to stop sexual violence and discrimination against women.
- It provide a new way to organize campaign or rally by women’s rights activists to come forward and fight for gender justice.
- Through social media, women across the world are connected and supporting each other such as lawyers, politicians, business owners for gender equality.
- Twitter’s hashtag function in particular allows women to easily follow issues that matter to them and establish coalitions based upon shared concerns, from immediate personal needs to calls for large-scale social change. E.g.: #MeToo movement, #SelfieWithDaughter
- Women are the most endangered to cyber abuse like online harassment.
- Online offences are often normalized due to the difficulty in tracing offenders and the complexity and inaccessibility of the justice delivery mechanisms. This creates mistrust of the public towards the justice system, leading to the further segregation of women.
- In this backdrop, social media has become a tool for the rapists to threaten their victims to not report the crime. Such platforms are used by harassers to silence women who struggle to break the anti-feminist social norms.
- A study revealed that a third of the surveyed women stopped giving her opinion online due to the fear of abusers.
- Online trolling is now going beyond the digital sphere, leading to cases like suicides. An international survey found that 20% of women being harassed offline believe that those attacks were connected to online abuse they receive.
- Fake profiles are often created for sully victims’ reputation.
- Due to the pandemic, restrictions on the worldwide push more people online, cases of online gender abuse have escalated.

Although Government is working to stop these cybercrimes but more measures should be needed on the Government level. Artificial Intelligence should be used in curbing violence against women and children. Government must work on developing some mobile applications that can alert parents if the child is under threat of cyber bullying.

Analysis

It is regrettable that these crimes are still prevailing in the country, despite the formulation of certain rules, policies and regulations by the government. After the incident of the December 2012 gang rape of the 23 year old paramedical student in a moving bus; still there are incidents of rape and domestic violence against women. There are certain important functions that are performed by the media and these are: (Ray, n.d.).

1. Media needs to take an enlarged, wider observation of crimes against women. It has to be influential in performing a social audit on factors that are responsible for the increasing offenses, particularly against women and children, including unconcerned analytical processes, miscarriage of justice, and increasing community impunity of the executors of crime and violent acts.
2. When taking into consideration severe problems, concerns and issues, the media is required to be particularly realistic and experiential.

Conclusion

The relationship between women and the media is complex and multifaceted. While the media can empower and inspire women, they often lack representation and representation of women. It is imperative that the media, content creators and consumers critique the messages being conveyed and take an active role in promoting more inclusive, diverse and empowering narratives. Despite the challenges, women in the media are actively engaged in empowerment and positive change. There is a growing movement to challenge gender norms and stereotypes, and more and more women’s voices and perspectives are coming to the fore. Filmmakers, journalists and content creators actively promote diverse and inclusive representation. Additionally, social media platforms offer women the opportunity to share their stories, challenge the narrative, and build supportive communities.

In addressing the subject of the enlistment of the media, Governments and other factors should aim at promoting a dynamic and observable policy of a typical gender viewpoint regarding the implementation of policies and plans (Sharma, n.d.). By challenging stereotypes, encouraging diverse representations and empowering women's voices, we can create a media landscape that better reflects the realities and aspirations of women in society.

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