

Media: A great tool to accelerate the process of Women Empowerment

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Abstract: *Media has become the most important tool of society to spread awareness about different fields because it has the potential to cover large population. Conventional media comes in different forms as print media (books, magazines, journals, novels and newspapers), television, movies, video games, music, cell phones, various kinds of software, and the Internet. To discuss women empowerment it is necessary to deal with the present situation of women in India. This paper would briefly discuss certain key aspects related to the women which media should adequately cover and facilitate the process of empowerment of women. We cannot ignore its supportive presence in the process of Women Empowerment. In this paper the role of media in women empowerment will also be discussed. It will also describe how media can accelerate the process of women empowerment by making people aware about different social issues and factors as: gender inequality, crime against women, women health, decline sex ratio, women education etc.*

Keywords: *Media and Women Empowerment*

I. 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

All over the world, the impact of media has been witnessed in recent years; it has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanizing action on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality.

We cannot ignore the role of women in nation's development as women play an important role in the development of the society and the nation. In this century in various developments process in scientific and technological era the status of women is changing at a fast pace but at the same time, we cannot ignore the part of the society where women are marginalized, discriminated and feel oppressed because of different gender divide issues. Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent time and the process of development will be left incomplete without the active participation of women. Women are the transmitters of culture in all the societies. The status of empowerment. women in a society is a true mirror of its social, religious, cultural and spiritual level (Khan & Moin, 2013).

People in India are demanding change, and they are harnessing the power of modern media to make their voices heard, Media is an important tool that affects all aspects of our life. As media has great effect on people, therefore it should be more aware before reporting and publishing any news. Right information given by the media can empower the rural as well as urban women and protect them from various problems. Various Media tools such as blogs, face book , social sites and internet are used for empowering the women by education, information, awareness , economic empowerment and self decision making. Internet can be easily used for empowerment of women. As we all know that the relationship of the media and the women is important because whatever image women have in our country is influenced by media. It is thus vital, to utilize the media for improving the status of women and empower them and divulging their role in national development. Keeping this in view, the present paper is focused on role of Media in women

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Narayana, A & Ahamad,T.(2016) revealed in their study that Media have a great potential for the empowerment of women, however the overall use of this media by women is very low. It also suggested that the powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality should be supported and further explored. They also found that how media can increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making. Khan, E. A. & Moin, A.(2013) studied in their research work named “Women Empowerment: Role of New Media” New Media is emerging as a powerful tool for gender empowerment in a developing country like India. There has been a rapid growth in the ICT sector since the late 1980's and the use of ICT has dramatically expanded since 1990's. The use of internet as a form of new media.,

the creation of different websites that focus on women empowerment in terms of education , literacy , health , knowledge , lifestyle and many more areas have been proliferated. Subhash, S. (2015) concluded in her study “Impact of Mass Media on Women: A Sociological Study of Gulbarga District” that impact of mass media on women has enabled their empowerment, but still there are many suggestions given by women to restrict crime related programmes, improvement of learning and knowledge, equal status of women, gender equality etc. Hence the media should take into the suggestions of women and improve their programmes, telecasts, circulations, knowledge and information.

III. NEED OF THE STUDY

Women empowerment is very much necessary in the nation’s growth be it economically, politically or socially. The term ‘empowerment of women’ has become popular especially after the 1980s. It refers to the process of strengthening the hands of women who have been suffering from various disabilities, inequalities and gender discrimination. The term “empowerment of women” refers to the process of providing power to woman to become free from the control of others, that is, to assume power to control her own life and to determine her own conditions. The term of “empowerment of women” could also be understood as the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so that they are able to play a role on par with men in society. In this contemporary world, women need to gain the same amount of power that men have. There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all spheres of life; they need empowerment in all walks of life. In India, women are still facing different obstacles in male-dominated cultures. The things are related to women’s status and their future. Nonetheless, the women of India are gradually being empowered in the different sectors like education, politics, the workforce and even more within their own households, there is a need to work at the grass root level to empower them especially in rural areas. So this study is a need of the hour as media is playing as an accelerating tool for the empowerment of women. Now they can link with the world through media. The positive effort of media towards women empowerment can definitely help to improve the situation of women in our country.

Objectives

- To study the role of media in the process of women empowerment.
- To suggest the ways how media can accelerate the process of women empowerment.

III. ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE PROCESS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Media’s role in the process of women empowerment in India

In this process, media has an important role to play, to make women aware about their own potential as they are also the major participants to bring change in society. In today’s world, print and electronic media play a crucial role in highlighting the exact scenario of society.

According to media depiction of women

Basically Indian media does not attack serious issues like exploitation and unequal treatment to women in different areas rather it is busy in reporting sex related incidents to increase its business. Now media is not remaining voice of truth rather it’s a mode of entertainment and earning money. Thus instead of highlighting the exploitation of woman it is becoming a reason in increase of violence against women. It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misdemeanors against women but in a very subtle manner .Generally, women’s problems never figure on the front page of a newspaper unless it is a gruesome murder or a case of rape. The special page for women in the newspapers is still related to kitchen tips, beauty tips, fashion and recipes.

According to advisory laws media has to follow these recommendations on reporting violence against the women.

- (i) Media needs to take an extended, broader view of crimes against women. It has to be instrumental in conducting a social audit on factors responsible for increasing crimes, particularly against women and children, including indifferent investigative procedures, miscarriage of justice, and growing social impunity of the perpetrators of crime.
- (ii) It also has to be contributory in creating awareness among civil society of the causes and nature of the crime itself, and of the preventive measures.
- (iii) When treating these issues, media has to be extremely factual and empirical.

Limited coverage in Media

Newspapers cover women's problems drawing the attention of policymakers to issues requiring immediate attention such as the adverse sex ratio, infant and maternal mortality, crime against women and the effects of poverty on women and their families. But this coverage is very limited with the rest of the space occupied by cinema actresses, models, video jockeys and the rich women and their hobbies. Many of the women's magazines are devoted to fashion, glamour, beauty aids, weight reduction, cookery and how to sharpen 'feminine instincts' to keep men and their in-laws happy. There are comparatively fewer articles on career opportunities, health awareness, and entrepreneurship, legal aid, counseling services, childcare, services and financial management. (G.N. Ray, 2008)

Thus the media should take into consideration the following points.

- The media must project the working women in the unorganized sector as worker and not merely as performing the duties of wife/daughter. Now the women are being major earners, so they must be projected as producers and not merely as consumers.
- The media should make effective attempts to not only highlight the problems of women in poverty, but should monitor in such a way that incompatible idol are not depicted, nor demeaning references to their work are made.
- To upgrade content and coverage, there should be combined efforts between NGO's, women's social action group, research organizations, institutes of mass communication, and the media personnel.

Women Journalist in Media

Like as in other professions, women are doing very well in media too. They are continuously inspiring with their work. In short, women have become indispensable in the field. Women's organizations and media must play a vital role in promoting this change. It is heartening that a wide variety of women's media initiatives are making a positive impact.

IV. MEDIA AS AN ACCELERATE TOOL FOR THE PROCESS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

To discuss about ways how media can accelerate the process of women empowerment it is necessary to know about the present situation of women in India. There are certain key aspects related to the women empowerment which media should adequately cover and facilitate the process of women empowerment.

To highlight the issue of gender inequality

A vast majority of Indian women work throughout their lives but the fact is that it is not officially recognized. Statistics on work force shows low figure of women workers. According to a survey conducted by NCW covering over 1200 women in both organized and unorganized sector it has been found that 50% experienced gender discrimination by way of physical and mental harassment of women at work (Ray, 2008). The main findings of the survey revealed that discrimination not only in salary but also in promotions, work issuing and working hours. We should not forget that Gender Equality is not just a women's issue. It is an issue of the nation. Media can play a great role by bringing these issues ahead.

To make people aware of wages discrimination

Women generally earn a far lower wage than men doing the same work. There is no state in India where men and women earn equal wages for their work. This is equally applicable to other areas of works such as mining, trade, transport services etc. In the various work sectors average wages earned by male is more than the wages earned by female (<https://studymoose.com/women-empowerment-7-essay>). The findings of UNDP which were published as Human Development Report concerning gender equality say that "Women's work is greatly undervalued in economic term. The value of household and community work transcends market value." The media can certainly bring some of these biases in to light. Specially, women journalists must take up this cause. The Indian constitution makes it mandatory to give equal protection to every citizen. Thus sympathetic media, judiciary and executive should stand for this together. Reform movement too is necessary in this regard.

To show the present situation of crime against women

The crime rates and violence against women in our country are increasing rapidly which reflects women as weaker sex who is still being dominated and exploited. They face violence inside and outside the family throughout their lives. The Crime Record Bureau of India's website shows that in the year 2006 total crime reported against women was 1,91731. Police record shows that a woman is molested in the country every 20 minutes; a rape occurs every 34 minutes and every 43 minutes an incident of sexual harassment takes place. Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped and every 93 minutes, a woman is killed. Media should raise voice

about these issues so that people could be aware about it. These issues should not be highlighted as entertainment series besides that it should be taken seriously.

To raise the issues of under representation on important positions

Women are underrepresented in governance and decision making positions. At present women represent approximately 8-9% of Parliamentary seats and less than 6% of cabinet positions. Less than 4% seats in High Courts and Supreme Courts are occupied by women. Less than 3% of administrators are women. Our only women prime minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi is a great example of women empowerment but still the participation of women on important positions is very less. Media can make a huge difference in this situation by appropriate efforts.

To know the situation of women health in country

Millions of Indian women simply lack the freedom to go out of the house in search of health services they need. The National Health Survey found that 52% women in India are not even consulted on decision about their own health. The antenatal and postnatal care is beyond the reach of many Indian women. The National Health Survey mentions that some 1, 00,000 to 1, 20,000 women die every year due to pregnancy related causes. In some States death rate is quite high and alarming. The rate in India is quite higher than the maternal mortality rate surveyed in Cuba, China, Srilanka and Vietnam. Girls and women face discrimination within the family; eating last and least. Media should make people aware about these issues.

To focus the serious issue of male-female ratio

Men outnumber women in India, unlike in many countries where the case is otherwise. The main cause of the gap in the male female ratio is prevailing practice of female fetus killing especially high in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. In these states, the ratio is shockingly low as compared to other Indian states. Female infant mortality rates are higher than male infant mortality rates. Our media needs to focus on this health issue of women. The various scheme incorporated by the govt. requires wider coverage so that women especially from economically weaker section can be benefitted from them.

Women education in country

In second highest populated country like India only 49% women are literate as compared to 66% of men. The ratio of school going girls is very less as compare to boys. The drop out percentage of girls is very high as to boys. The female adult literacy rate in many countries like Malaysia, Srilanka, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia is higher than that in India. Media could play an important role in improving the percentage of women education in the country.

V. CONCLUSION

Therefore media should promote respect and dignity to women by avoiding highlighting negative portrayal of women. The subject Women and Media is quite relevant in the present day context. This is a huge platform from where the process of women empowerment could be accelerated. Media can play an important role to empower women in different fields as now it is very easy, to search anything related to empowerment through internet. Media has a great caliber for the empowerment of women. Therefore no other sector can match the efforts of media in each field to empower women.

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