

Gender and Mass Media

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Mass media is a term denoting that section of the media specifically designed to reach a very large audience (typically at least as large as the whole population of a nation-state), today including not only radio and television, which tend to be limited to the local or national level, but also the Internet, which is global. Mass media occupies an increasingly central place in the lives of women and men all over the world. The **mass media** are all those media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. **Broadcast media** (also known as electronic media) transmit their information electronically and comprise television, radio, film, movies, CDs, DVDs, and other devices such as cameras and video consoles. Alternatively, **print media** use a physical object as a means of sending their information, such as a newspaper, magazines, comics, books, brochures, newsletters, leaflets, and pamphlets. The organizations that control these technologies, such as television stations or publishing companies, are also known as the mass media. Media is able to achieve mass media status in its own right, due to the many mass media services it provides, such as email, websites, blogging, internet and television.

Contrast with personal media

Non-mass or "personal" media (point-to-point and person-to-person communication) include:

- Speech
- Telephony
- Postal mail
- Some uses of the Internet

Purposes or Role of Media

There are a number of uses for mass media including advocacy, enrichment, entertainment, journalism, and public service.

- **Advocacy** can be used for both business and social concerns. This can include advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations, and political communication.
- **Enrichment** can take the form of education through literature for example. Entertainment is traditionally through performances of acting, music, and sports, along with light reading; since the late 1990s also through video and computer games.
- **Journalism** involves the spread of news on a large scale.
- **Public service announcements** are cases of state or non-governmental agencies reaching out to inform the public of a pressing event.

According to Pervez (1984) media has three societal roles:

1. The watchman, to provide information about the happenings and the events.
2. The contributor to the decision making process, to provide the material necessary for a dialogue on certain issues.
3. The modifier of attitude, during the process of decision making the media modifies attitudes, preferences and actions in the desired directions.

In a developing country media has dual roles first to entertain and second to educate the masses.

Influence of Mass Media in Society

Through its various formats, the mass media can reach most people on earth. This is an incredible opportunity for communication and education among the peoples of the planet. As these technologies become cheaper, they are becoming accessible to both the rich and poor. As the technology necessary for mass communication becomes cheaper and more widespread, the planet will indeed become smaller as news travels even faster among all people of the world. The effects of the rise of mass media are not all positive. Many ridicule at the fact that it is seemingly impossible to escape from the media, as isolation from all forms of communication is increasingly difficult in modern society.

Pakistan and Media

Ahmar (2005) describes the situation of Pakistani media as:

Media profession has, traditionally, been a male-dominated one in Pakistan (and around the world). Women are underrepresented in the media due to low hiring rates and sexual discrimination in the workplace. Further, they are excluded from the kind of power to make decisions about media portrayal that those at the top rungs of the media ladder often enjoy; for instance, no woman has ever been Editor of an Urdu newspaper. The late working hours required in this profession carry a social stigma for women.

Further she says "gender inequality in the media is not "merely" a women's issue, but, rather, a question of discrimination and therefore a human rights issue. The worst elements of the press have stereotyped and dehumanized women, turning them into commodities to be 'consumed'. Similarly, the excessive use of violence in the media is destroying the human/social sensibilities of Pakistanis."

Negative role of Media

Biases

1. Covering crime - "The women in the cases of rape are the worst victims. A lot of newspapers report with a bias against these women and reinforce the existing non-supportive attitude of the society towards women. No wonder then that the official reaction to rape continues to be that of accusation towards women."
2. Stereotypical images - "There is a marked increase in women's magazines...focusing heavily on the domestic side of women and trying to prove that every woman needs to be a perfect cook, a tailor, and housekeeper and also be beautiful. The intellectual qualities of women are mentioned nowhere."
3. Hypocrisy in media portrayal - "The media in Pakistan has no problems while exposing physical and sexual features of women but is reluctant to bring forward issues of HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment, sex and flesh trade, trafficking on the pretext of obscenity."
4. Role of advertising - "It is said that 'bare breasts are used to sell everything, be it drinks, jeans, cars, medicines, juice,' and Pakistan is no exception."
5. Reinforcing of the images of the virile men - "We must look at the question of male-sexuality and advertisements in the newspapers and analyze the linkages between these advertisements and acts of violence..."

6. Use of offensive language - "The language used is not only abusive and sexist, but also extremely judgmental, lacking any investigative or analytical value."
7. Absence of gender-sensitive media policies - "Pakistan's media policy [has]...always been determined by the party or agency in power....We have witnessed women getting a greater exposure in some regimes than others. Women have also been subjected to undue restrictions concerning their appearance in the media."

Gender Portrayal in Media

Wood (1996) elaborated on the themes how the media represents gender:

1. Women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant and invisible
2. Men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender
3. Depiction of relationship between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women.

Especially in men's programming, women are often defined sexually, what seems to matter most is their sexual conduct (Gallagher 2001). Within many advertisements sexuality is a prevalent and important feature of selling the product. From this, it is easy to see how sexuality has become such a norm within our society (Rouner 2003). Finally, the media tells us that we need to be just as the images suggest, if we are any less, we are abnormal and therefore not desirable. It is suggested to women that everything in their lives should revolve around attracting men. Having a smaller waistline, larger breasts, and a sense of sexuality for women will get and keep the man (Medial Portrayals of Women). From the women in media to the types of products targeting this very feeling of inadequacy, some women feel that they are constantly being told they are not good enough. If no real women are presented within the media, it is hard for young girls to fully understand and accept the realities of life.

Media Influences on Girls and Women

With the stereotypes represented in the media, there are many negative effects on young girls and women.

Body Image

The images presented to society from the media influence how women feel about their bodies. Below are the problems that many women in America struggle with today.

Misrepresentation of Women in Media

Within video games, there is an outnumbering of males to females (Miller 2007). This may signify that women are less important. In a study done by Rouner (2003) about ad stereotypes, women were more likely to notice the stereotypes, which could mean that men have a lower involvement in advertising. This could be a reason why women seem more affected by the images presented in the media. Cantor (1972) found that women in T.V. commercials were mostly shown in domestic roles while men were mostly portrayed in occupational roles. If women are shown as employed they are shown in traditionally feminine occupations.

Men in the Media

According to Media Awareness there are only six ways in which men are represented within the media:

1. "The Joker is a very popular character with boys, perhaps because laughter is part of their own "mask

of masculinity." A potential negative consequence of this stereotype is the assumption that boys and men should not be serious or emotional. However, researchers have also argued that humorous roles can be used to expand definitions of masculinity.

2. The Jock is always willing to "compromise his own long-term health; he must fight other men when necessary; he must avoid being soft; and he must be aggressive." By demonstrating his power and strength, the jock wins the approval of other men and the adoration of women.

3. The Strong Silent Type focuses on "being in charge, acting decisively, containing emotion, and succeeding with women." This stereotype reinforces the assumption that men and boys should always be in control, and that talking about one's feelings is a sign of weakness.

4. The Big Shot is defined by his professional status. He is the "epitome of success, embodying the characteristics and acquiring the possessions that society deems valuable." This stereotype suggests that a real man must be economically powerful and socially successful.

5. The Action Hero is "strong, but not necessarily silent. He is often angry. Above all, he is aggressive in the extreme and, increasingly over the past several decades, he engages in violent behavior."

6. The clown commonly appears as an inexperienced father figure in TV ads and sitcoms. Usually well-intentioned and light-hearted, these characters range from slightly incompetent to completely hopeless when it comes to parenting their children or dealing with domestic (or workplace) issues. "

The above quotation expresses how men are often shown within the media. Men seem to be constrained to these certain roles, both within media and outside in the real world.

Relationships and Media

Often, the media will represent relationships between men and women as perfect scenarios. If someone buys into this ideal, they may become less satisfied with their own relationship, because they have repeatedly accepted the idea of relationships without flaws (Wood 2007).

Another problem regarding relationships within the media is the image of sexual relationships (Wood 2007). Music videos as well as TV programs and movies, depict these types of relationships as normal or expected and without consequences. They create an unrealistic viewpoint.

Changes that Need to be Made

There may already be a switch going on within our culture. Both genders comments about the ads in a study done by Rouner (2003) criticized them or pointed out the unreality of it. This could show young women that they do not need to force themselves into believing that they should look like the ideal image.

While there may be some advancement, there is still a substantial problem. The first step to ridding our society of the problem of stereotypes is **education**. With advanced education about these stereotypes and the different means by which they are represented we can create a better technique to resisting and rejecting the stereotypes (Rouner, 2003). Another change is needed in the public to change the images the media portrays. This is because commercial criteria overpowers the social welfare of society. Once audiences stop asking for these images (such as women as sex objects or housewives with no brains) the media will stop representing it (Gallagher 2001).

2. One of the best ways to start solving within individuals would be to start learning to live with rather than against the body (Bate & Taylor 1988). This does not mean that one needs to love their body right away. It is about dealing with the internal problem rather than the external. Once the body is accepted, it will gradually become liked and hopefully loved.

Women's Portrayal in print media

Romance novels: women are the major readers of these novels. The reason for the popularity of these novels is that they provide readers some relaxation and escape from their daily life (Radway, 1991)

Women are portrayed as weak, helpless, submissive and sexually naïve, whereas the men are strong, powerful, controlling and sexually experienced. These are highly stereotypical and traditional roles (Modleski, 1980).

Women as media persons

Men continue to occupy 75 % of positions of the power in the mass media. Sarwar (2004) found that there are more women in media than ever before. The presence of women in these fields is as essential as the presence of gender sensitive male colleagues. Yet only about 5 % of tv writers, executives and producers are women (Lichter, Lichter & Rothman, 1986).

Recommendations

The inclusion of more women's voices in, and their empowerment to make key decisions about, Pakistan's media would help foster "women's right to participate in public debates and to have their views heard, and the right to see themselves portrayed in the media in ways that accurately represent the complexities of their lives."

1. Dialogue and debate with media critics and activists to build awareness of what are deeply rooted, traditional images and interpretations of women and their role
2. Efforts on the part of advocates to understand the language and priorities of the media; they must come to the dialogue equipped not just with opinions, but with facts and figures
3. Examination of the role of university departments of mass communication in gender sensitization and, if appropriate, the proposal of gender-positive changes to the curricula of these departments.
4. Increased gender sensitization
5. Women should not always be displayed in stereotypical roles
6. Media should not emphasize the physical beauty only
7. Women should be shown as having their identity and unlimited interests
8. She should not be confined to domestic roles only.

Areas where Pakistani media can and should bring a change

1. Education
2. Workforce participation
3. Land and property rights
4. Crimes against women
5. Sexual violence
6. Trafficking
7. Dowry abuse
8. Domestic violence
9. Marriage and divorce issues
10. Health especially women and HIV/AIDS
11. Women's rights
12. Pregnancy and child birth