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# MEDIA AND WOMEN

-Prachi Chande<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Every day, we encounter reports of violations of women's human rights in India in newspapers, television, and technological gadgets. Human rights are the fundamental rights that every individual has as a member of the human family. The Indian constitution also guarantees equal rights for men and women. However, in the field of women's human rights in India, there is a significant gap between theory and practice. Our civilization is male-dominated, with men always regarded as superior to society. The India Women have to deal with discrimination, injustice, and dishonour. In India, women live in substandard conditions even though they have more rights than men. The human rights of women in India will be clarified by this article, with a focus on the violations of all fundamental rights accorded to women. Women face assault, sex-related pregnancies, inheritance mismanagement, guilt for not having children, domestic violence and cruelty toward spouses, infidelity, prostitution, and eve-prodding in a violent world. In contrast to violent forms of torture that occur both inside and outside the home, like when a woman is killed by her husband or in-laws from one point of view inside the house, or when law enforcement, officials, or other people commit violent crimes, either at work or outside the home. The success or failure of women's legislation will depend on how well it is implemented, even though many laws, rulings, and official initiatives have been passed with the goal of improving the status of women. The mass media shape our perceptions of social reality by presenting only some aspects of reality and by continuous repetition of images and messages. Although the form and content of mass media have changed dramatically over the years, the mass media have played a decisive role in reinforcing gender stereotypes and in reinforcing patriarchal culture by constructing new meanings and images and by setting the agenda for public opinion through selective themes and viewpoints.

Keywords: Protection, human rights, women, criminal laws, violations of women's

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Women's image and the role that women play in the media are heavily influenced by existing social and cultural norms which includes gender stereotypes. At a time when visual means of communication predominate, the stereotyped images of women and men circulated by the media can undermine progress made on gender equality. The media's gender imbalance feeds negative preconceptions. Stereotypes are reinforced and there are disparate depictions. Social media has the power to reinforce pre-existing gender norms. Punishment for sending offensive messages through communication service, etc." is covered under Section 66A of the Act.

In the case of *Yogesh Prabhu v. State of Maharashtra*<sup>105</sup>, two individuals were having an online discussion when the man proposed marriage to the woman which she declined broke off all communication, deleting him from her social media "friends list." The perpetrator continued to pursue her, sending explicit movies to her email address from unidentified IDs. The offender, was tried under Section 79 of BNS and 66E of the Information Technology Act, 2008 since Section 354D (Section 78 BNS) could not be used retroactively to a 2009 offence as it was enacted in 2013.<sup>2</sup> Indian courts have evolved distinct standards of scrutiny throughout the last decades to determine the extent to which the state may intervene in cases involving pornography or other potentially "obscene" content. Although not directly related to pornography, the British case of *R v. Hicklin*<sup>134</sup> established a test that set a precedent for extremely low bar of review by allowing a conviction for "obscenity" if it was shown that it served the most vulnerable member of society's prurient interests. Roth test, the requirements of obscenity should be applicable to the regular individual and be comparable to the standards of the community. In the instances of *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* <sup>136</sup> and *Miller v. California*<sup>137</sup>, this standard was further altered. In the latter instance, the proprietor of a mail order company that specialized in pornographic material mass distributed a number of pamphlets with explicit sexual content. The Miller test, a three-prong standard, was created by the court to determine obscenity in this particular case. This uses a community norm that is offensive in nature, using offence as a yardstick for obscenity. One in five experts interviewed by media are women. Women are frequently portrayed in stereotypical and hyper-sexualised roles in advertising and the film industry, which has long-term social consequences. And 73% of the management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women. In many countries around the world women's opinions are dismissed and they are not taught to ask questions and be part of public debate. Without information women don't know about and can't exert their rights to education, to property, pensions, etc. and they

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

cannot challenge existing norms and stereotypes. This makes it impossible to achieve inclusive societies as we aim to achieve through the Global Development agenda. Access to information empowers women to claim their rights and make better decisions. Gender training refers to a range of gender awareness-raising and training activities, starting with the general awareness-raising courses for all the staff (including the management) and ending with specific training sessions aimed at transferring specialised knowledge (including methods and techniques) on how to put gender equality into practice to a specific set of actors. In particular, gender training in media organisations is used to heighten sensitivity to gender issues in media contents and to promote women's career advancement by strengthening their skills. Training represents 24% of methods and tools identified in the survey 'Collection of methods, tools and good practices in the field of women and the media', which analysed media companies in the private and public sector, NGOs, professional associations and the gender machinery, searching for tools to foster women's access to expression in and through the media. With the advent of Liberalization Globalisation and Privatization, brought a new array of hope of uplifting the financial status and social well-being, previously self-employment options were limited to agriculture, small-scale businesses and cottage industry, with the advent of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), digitalization, Make in India and national start-ups programs, people took advantage of it and started new ventures based on online digital platforms highly using social media for advertisement and selling. The profession of Entrepreneurship has always been dominated by men, however with the advent of LPG in 1990s the number of women entrepreneurs increased sporadically. The concept of women empowerment has become multi-spatial, assuring self-dependency and autonomous rights to organise their own resources to boost up their condition, which would, in a way, help them to come out of their downtrodden condition (Cohen & Winn, 2007). COVID-19 and the lockdown had restricted people's movement and business activities, and many were closed; many ladies had to shut down their enterprises for a certain period due to a lack of finance and a fall in demand of the customers as the needs and priorities were shifted to health care and basic amenities required for survival. This article discussed the response of women's enterprises and the challenges they faced due to the pandemic. They could not support their family as there was a steep decline in beauty salons and boutique products, and healthcare and safety products were emphasized immensely. Most women entrepreneurs used digital technology, which helped them survive. They shifted their enterprises and businesses to a virtual space, which only required a proper internet network and product page and website maintenance. A study by Papadopoulos and colleagues (2020) states that by using digital technology, most entrepreneurs could overcome the negative consequences

of COVID-19. Women who transformed their businesses and enterprises on a digital platform and used different sources of mass media and social media platforms could survive and cope with the uncertainty. They used social media to advertise and sell the products to maintain the product quality as promised on the media platform, and they garnered the people's trust. Women entrepreneurs used social media to directly communicate with customers and ensure the promised quality helped them sell their products in different parts of the country, which could not have been possible without social media. Service-oriented jobs like teaching consultancy were also transformed online, women were given online classes, and we attained online meetings through Skype, Google Meet, etc., while working from home during the pandemic. The term empowerment is expressed by Sen (1999) in "Development as Freedom" emphasizes that development should not only be seen from mere economic measures, but also to the extent to which society has many choices from various opportunities, namely by introducing the concept of 'human freedom' in five respects: economic empowerment, political freedom, social opportunities, security and transparency as the principles and ultimate goals of development, while economic measures are the way to achieve them. According to Suharto (2010) empowerment not only includes strengthening individual members of the community, but also the institutions. Instilling modern cultural values, such as hard work, self-reliance, efficiency, openness, responsible attitude, are the main parts of empowerment. In addition, the purpose of empowerment is to strengthen the power of the community, especially the weak groups who have powerlessness, both because of internal conditions (such as their own perceptions), or because of external conditions (such as being oppressed by unfair social structures). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have catalyzed communication and networking between and among people on a global scale. However, as ICTs have become ubiquitous and grown in both type and access, a digital divide has emerged. This divide parallels gaps in social contexts, such as income and education, as those who use and benefit from access to technologies often have other resources more readily available<sup>3</sup>. This divide widens the inequity and inequality gaps based on gender, age, disability, or socioeconomic status.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this study was to analyze the connection between patterns of media consumption and perceptions toward the role of media in reinforcing gender equality and effective gender communication.

The study also aims at

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<sup>3</sup> Dixon LJ, Coorea T, Straubhaar J, Covarrubias L, Graber D, Spence J, Rojas V. Gendered spaces

<sup>4</sup> Internet use by secondary school students: a digital divide in sustainable societies? Sustainability. 2018;10(10):1–14. doi: 10.3390/su10103703.

- Examine how women in leadership have been depicted in various media outlets, either as television and movies, the print media, advertisements, social media, web news and streaming services.
- Determine statistically significant correlations between certain media use categories and the perceptions of leadership representation in a gendered way.
- Offer suggestions on how they can improve the visibility and accuracy of women's leadership representations in media content and leadership positions in media outfits

Media's role in gender equality and effective communication in India has been studied using various methods. Some research show the irony between media images and women's experiences. Other works examine how media may empower women and challenge patriarchy. Indian gender equality in the context of globalization and liberalization is complicated. Globalization's structural adjustment measures may negatively affect women, but the media available to them through expanded, diversified global markets offers a chance to refute patriarchal orientations by providing multiple role models of women (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). It assumes that media may promote social transformation even in uneven economic conditions. On one side, India saw some government initiatives to bring women to the boardroom, but women's empowerment has remain. Violence against women often occurs among intimate partners. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is any harmful behavior—physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional—by a current or former partner, including stalking and financial abuse, focused on power and control, occurring in all relationship types (heterosexual, same-sex, married, dating) and affecting millions globally, with women disproportionately impacted, though it's a preventable public health issue with severe consequences. This definition covers violence by both current and former spouses and intimate partners. There are a growing recognition and understanding of the potential health consequences of IPV both concerning acute and chronic health impacts beyond the physical trauma cases seen in emergency departments of acute care hospitals and primary care settings. In the past two decades, a growing body of literature has focused on associations between IPV and physical and mental health across a wide range of disciplines. This is reflected in the increasing volume of research articles that deal with psychological consequences and correlates of IPV, including PTSD and other related psychological conditions. Contemporary women's movements in North America and Western Europe have played an important role in shaping the academic agenda of feminist communication research. A feminist critique of media content and its implications in the construction of gender has been an important part of feminist cultural politics. In developing countries, feminist communication research on media content, images and representation has grown since the early 1980s. It was the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) that

provided political impetus worldwide to initiate research and action for changing women's portrayal and participation in the mass media. In comparison to the Western feminist scholarship in the field of communication, however, communication research on Third World women has remained fragmentary and descriptive. Despite proliferation of women- in-development literature in the last two decades, gender in the field of mass communication has remained a marginal area of inquiry among feminist scholars (Steeves 1993). Hence, empirical and theoretical work in the area of women and mass media in developing countries is limited and uneven across regions. As a result, media research on women in developing countries has relied heavily on the feminist paradigm for communication research, developed in the West. Despite increasing participation of men and women in the work force, work is an underdeveloped theme in the commercial Indian films. On the basis of an analysis of several Hindi films, Kishwar and Vanita (1987) highlight diminished importance of women's work outside the home in film narratives and examine how middleclass ideal of a domesticated woman is reinforced in divergent work roles. In general, the work life of a hero usually exists to feed to the film narratives of romance, family melodrama and violent conflict. While women are mostly shown as working only when compelled by circumstances. Even educated middleclass women are shown without any occupation. When they do work, they are concentrated in stereotyped jobs such as typist, secretary, school teacher and occasionally as lawyer and doctor. The working middle-class woman, in general, is a young woman, a modern miss, who is doing a job while waiting to get married. But by and large women are shown to work only in the absence of a male breadwinner, a father, a brother or a husband. These women are presented as unfortunate victims sacrificing their own interests to support the family. It is only when she tries to rebel against her role as a wife and a mother or chooses to work to assert her independence, the hostility against a working woman surfaces. Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media. They are typically characterised as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to demean men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose violence. Such portrayals can influence perceptions in terms of what society may expect from men and women, but also what they may expect from themselves. They promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society. Attention needs to be paid to identifying and addressing these various gender imbalances and gaps in the media. The European Commission (2010) recommends, for example, that there should be a set expectation of gender parity on expert panels on television or radio and the creation of a thematic database of women to be interviewed and used as experts by media professionals. In addition, conscious efforts should be made to portray women and men in non-stereotypical situations. Women's representation in media

will not see significant improvement until women are better represented in editorial leadership and newsroom management, and more outlets with women owners are able to survive and attract funding. This marks a mere 1 percent increase from 2022.<sup>5</sup> Efforts to meaningfully improve these numbers will require more than offering to train more women journalists. To ease the way for women seeking to advance in journalistic careers, the evidence points to several promising interventions: capital investments for news startups founded by women, the adoption and implementation of equal opportunity policies in established outlets, and advocacy by journalist unions for the protection of women's rights in the workplace. Gender-based violence online is a new frontier in threats to gender equality in the media sector. Global tech companies have gained significant ground as the main distributors of news and information, often without taking ethical or editorial responsibility on numerous issues including gender equality and women's rights online. It is urgent that transnational regulators as well as intergovernmental and regional self-regulatory bodies define international standards and regulatory mechanisms to address online GBV and protect the rights of women and vulnerable groups in the digital space. Legislation-enactment processes can draw inspiration from existing GBV laws based on an understanding that "what is illegal offline should also be illegal online." Transnational regulators should press and encourage digital corporations to participate in standard-setting. The next step is for national regulators and self-regulators to ensure the norms and approaches are localized to the country context, with measures to enforce compliance by platform providers and users. Global research reveals that only a few countries have adopted gender-sensitive media codes that go beyond a simple prescription to avoid discrimination based on sex or gender. A gender equality perspective must be integrated when codes are revised, or new ones drafted, and should at a minimum also include clauses on gender stereotyping and gender-balanced news sourcing. The details may be the purview of editorial guidelines in newsrooms; however, they often follow industry guidelines. Industry bodies need to take the first step in drafting more robust gender equality standards, and should monitor and disseminate performance and compliance results. Industry-level voluntary associations should exert their power to foster women's participation throughout the self-regulation process, from decision-making to design and implementation. Given the authority that industry associations have over their members, they are well-suited to mobilize media outlets around shared commitments. Such bodies should agree on transparent principles regarding gender equality in industry structure and operations, enshrine the principles in ethics and practice codes, and commit to

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<sup>5</sup> "Women and Leadership in the News Media 2023: Evidence from 12 Markets" (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023)

implementation.

## Whole-of-Society Approach: Levels of Intervention

Micro	Meso	Macro
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Comprises:</b> individual journalists and media organizations.</li><li>■ <b>Examples of interventions:</b> training journalists on gender-sensitive reporting and working with media organizations to implement policies protecting the rights of women in the workplace.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Comprises:</b> the national media sector in any given context.</li><li>■ <b>Actors:</b> media organizations, media professional associations and civil society, international assistance organizations.</li><li>■ <b>Examples of interventions:</b> advocating for policy changes across media organizations and finding ways to bolster independent media's financial viability.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Comprises:</b> the broader enabling environment for media, including local laws and regulations, as well as international agreements affecting the media sector.</li><li>■ <b>Actors:</b> government, international assistance organizations, and bilateral donor agencies.</li><li>■ <b>Examples of interventions:</b> finding ways to implement the recommendations of international agreements on gender equality to ensure equal access to employment in the media sector.</li></ul>

The Council of Europe Convention preventing the violence against women and Domestic Violence is the most comprehensive legally binding treaty addressing the root causes of violence against women and promoting greater equality between women and men. The convention aims at changing attitudes and eliminating gender stereotypes not only among individuals, but also at the level of institutions. Taking into consideration the fact that young girls' self-image is shaped, among other things, by the images they see in the media, as well as the potential impact of gender stereotypes in the context of violence against women, the convention addresses the responsibility of the private sector, in particular the media and the information and communication technology sector, to work towards an enhanced respect for women's dignity and to become involved in the prevention of violence against women (Article 17).

- For this we need coherent policies, rules, and mechanisms on all levels, starting with national media policies and media industry self-regulation.
- Safety of female media workers needs to be a key priority for Member States and the media industry..
- Men from across the three regions enjoy significantly higher job satisfaction than women, but not gender non-conforming individuals.
- Similarly, men also have far higher perceptions of newsroom gender equality than women – that is, they find easier access to the field and more senior roles than women. Again, this is not substantially different from gender non-conforming people.
- Women were significantly more likely to be verbally and physically harassed both in the newsroom and on field work assignments than men across all three tested regions.
- Physical harassment against women was more prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa than in SouthEast Asia and the Arab region which were not dissimilar. Cases of verbal harassment varied significantly between the three regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa the highest, followed by the Arab region and then SouthEast Asia.
- Combined instances of physical and verbal sexual harassment had significant negative impact on job satisfaction.

Female politicians and journalists also experience higher incidence of online gender-based and sexual abuse and harassment than their male counterparts. This can result in self-censorship and a ‘chilling effect’, causing public figures to retreat from ‘social media’ or to restrict the topics they post about, thus inhibiting their professional and civic participation. According to many experts, gendered online violence against journalists now needs to be tackled as a multilevel, online-governance issue, rather than one of personal safety, with improved support from peers, employers and legal and political institutions.

Finally, the mainstreaming and normalisation of male-supremacist misogyny among youth poses a significant and urgent threat to women and girls on ‘social media’. Girls report that easy access to violent pornography is affecting boys’ understandings and expectations of sex. The Digital Services Act promises to improve the safety of women and girls on ‘social media’ platforms through its focus

on systemic risks. Careful monitoring and evaluation will however be required to ensure it meets these goals. We recommend that a gender-based review is conducted of the act, a year from the first risk assessments, to ensure it is functioning as intended and that the 'social media' companies are complying with their obligations on access to data and algorithmic transparency. And there should be greater regulation of 'social media' advertising, with expansion of the act to include gender in the restriction of targeted advertising. Media is undoubtedly the most essential tool for society to reach out to the masses and create an immense impact; social media is an inevitable source in the hands of the people. The emancipation of women through education and their involvement in business has also led to the growth of media. However, media can also cause oppression, the way women are objectified in the name of item no. Songs of Bollywood are also used in a derogatory manner, stereotyping the images of women. The contribution of women is overshadowed by the news of the hardship they face in daily life. It included TV series MMS and other electronic media, which was left out and played a prominent role in stereotyping women. Women's increasing participation in decision-making and self-expressing through media and news technology has empowered them. Media as a tool for Women's empowerment and gender equality should be supported. Media plays a pivotal role in steadfast women's empowerment; the usage of mass media, especially social media, is variedly used to uplift the conditions of women; it can help us to enlighten people about the struggle and discrimination they face in day-to-day life to educating their masses about the positions and treatment they deserve in the society. Media campaigns can help in ensuring the prevalence of gender parity develops in the minds of the people. Contents which promote gender equality can help us to overcome the differences between men and women they face in day-to-day life as mass media has always allowed people to influence people unconsciously in society; it is the duty of the media to emphasise the success stories of women who have achieved different heights of success in different strata of lives. Media is an essential agent of socialization shaping gender roles. Mass media should undertake projects to ensure that women are represented dignifiedly rather than portraying them negatively and stereotyping them. A robust legislative effort and social awareness can be used to spread awareness in society, entrusting ethics and morality to fight the evils in the community which objectify women's bodies and treat them as commodities rather than living beings with rights and emotions to live a dignified life. The Pre and Post Independent India has witnessed Indian housewives entering into business through their kitchen recipes like papad, spices and catering now with receiving education and gaining knowledge in technology helped them to turn towards e-business, which helped them to work in the flexible work environment with no rigid time duration. Women are able to quit their 9 to

9 jobs and venture out to new start-ups in baking, jewellery designing, fashion stylists, interior decorators, social journalism, apparel manufacturers, and social media influencers, heading towards financial independence and contributing to the economy of the country. Social media has played a pivotal role in making women adopt entrepreneurship and utilise their leisure time more productively. Thus, we can conclude that, undoubtedly, mass media has empowered women, but there have been many repercussions as well; females who get quick fame and money at a very young age hamper their character development, which eventually causes mental sickness in the future, as they don't know how to deal with this quick success. (Durham, 2009) , many women entrepreneurs lack knowledge of the use of mass media, especially social media; they do not understand the use of the internet, mass media and how it works, so they cannot put their foot in it, and entrepreneurs who have little knowledge and have taken their business online sometimes face fraudulent deals from online wholesale and retails, their private information are used in mischievous ways which make many people go for online shopping. Influencers who use YouTube and Instagram and earn huge chunks from brand promotion go for obscenity and adult content to attract more subscribers; they become the pawns of online sexual predators. Every coin has two sides; the drawbacks and disadvantages are there such as many women with limited knowledge do fall into the trap of some fraudulent groups hawking online and loot with them with irregular transactions, while many women still do not have the basic knowledge of using social media or following with the trends and algorithms of social media, which we cannot deny.