

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEDIA

Priyanka Sikhwal

Abstract

Indian women have played significant role in the socio-economic development of the country. They have proved their potential in every aspect of life. In spite of this, women are still victims of various evils existing in the society. Starting from family level to society and national level women face various challenges. These challenges affect every aspect of women's life. The process of women empowerment finds solutions to such problems by making women independent decision makers. Among various tools, media is playing a significant role in the process of women empowerment. It has brought a number of issues in notice of people which otherwise would have remained unturned and also helps in developing public opinion on issues of social and national interest. This paper assesses the role of media in women empowerment.

Key words: Society, social problems, women empowerment, media and ethics

Introduction

Millions of events occur throughout this world every second, and what brings us close to these events is media. Media is an inseparable part of our life and plays a significant role in our society. It is considered among pillars of the society. It exerts huge impact not only on modeling public outlook but also shapes emotions and feelings beneath. All the three forms of media i.e. print, electronic and social media are very important. Newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and social media are all significant sources from where information about various events occurring throughout the world reach the people. If the information is ethically presented it develops understanding for the event concerned. Media is used for various purposes such as news circulation, advertisements, marketing, public and political announcements etc. It is an effective tool for social concerns as well. It helps to form and reform common opinions and critically analyze judgment regarding various issues. It raises important concerns that might not be raised otherwise in general public. It also plays significant role in compelling authorities, officials and government to formulate specific social policies or change an existing one. Thus media is an efficacious tool in the hands of the society of modern times which is accessed by a large percentage of population. Internet has drastically changed the mode of communication between people. The

advance concept of media i.e. social media comprising of updating apps and social networking sites plays a very significant role in present times.

World cannot be thought without women. They form half the population and are an important part of our society and nation. Due to the male dominance in the society, women have suffered through the ages and have been denied of their equal rights and opportunities. They face various problems such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, female foeticides, gender discrimination, health issues, rape, prostitution, women trafficking and many more. All such evils ceses the socio-economic development of the country. However this scenario has changed in the past few decades with the awakening of women empowerment ideas throughout the world. The concept of empowerment which literally means – the authority or power given to someone to do something, is responsible for improvement in the status of women in recent times.

In the words of **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam:**

“Empowerment of women leads to development of a good family, good society and, ultimately, a good nation.”

Thus signifying the importance of women empowerment in present times. Women empowerment in its real sense is the liberation of women from social, economic, political and gender inequalities. It ensures life as they wish. Women empowerment's basic concern is to nurture equality in society and in no way it is concerned with giving undue advantages to women. Women empowerment

can be social empowerment i.e. promoting gender equality so that women get equal opportunities in every aspect of life in comparison to men. It can be educational empowerment where women are provided with the necessary education, knowledge and skills so that they can be efficient independent decision makers. Women empowerment can be economic, occupational, legal or political. All of these help women to be self-confident and self-reliant so they can actively participate in building the society and the nation (Pratibha, 2017 and Subhashini, 2018).

Objectives

Media is an efficacious medium which can play a significant role in the empowerment of women. The present research review was undertaken with the following objectives-

- Assessment of status of women empowerment in Indian society.
- Assessing the role of media in women empowerment.
- Suggesting measures for increasing the effectiveness of media in women empowerment.

Methodology

The present research paper is descriptive, analytical and suggestive in nature. Secondary sources of data such as research papers, books, articles, reports, conference and workshops literature and proceedings were utilized for the study. On the basis of assessment according to the objective of the study various suggestions were proposed.

Review of Literature

The potential of media to reach a large proportion of population in rural as well as urban areas has made it a powerful effective tool in modern times. This potential has attracted the attention of numerous researchers about the impact media can make in women empowerment. Some of them are discussed below-

Ojha, 2011, stated that women in India are facing discrimination and are neglected in the male dominated society. Although women are making important contribution towards the development of the society and the nation but without any recognition. They are facing domestic violence, nutrition and health issues, sexual harassment and other problems which are preventing them from

living a stress free life. According to Ojha, media is the mirror and media reports are the reflections of the events in the society. Media along with advancements in information and communication technology has brought about a revolution in women empowerment.

Suresh, 2011 also favors Ojha's view and mentions that the developments in the Information and technology sector has influenced growth in various other sectors such as industry, agriculture as well as social sector. Amidst the pros and cons of its usage the ICT has to play a responsible role to get the desired results. For an effective women empowerment the problems associated with women should also be considered simultaneously with responsibility and priority along with the advancement in technology.

Duflo, 2012, stated that women empowerment and economic development are closely interrelated. Improvement in one may enhance the other but Duflo also contradicted the same by saying that the relationship is not that strong to be self-sustaining. Concentrated and dedicated efforts are necessary for developing gender equality.

Kashyap, 2014, called media as a platform for social empowerment including women empowerment. The virtual platform of social networking has been very effective for women. This is providing them a space where they can express themselves more comfortably and discuss various problems they are facing in day to day life such as eve teasing, stalking, harassment and violence etc. Basic media components of newspaper, TV, radio and internet provide them with the latest updates and various debate and discussion based sites are helping them out in discussion about the events and sorting out their grievances and also in forming reforming their opinion about an issue along with making decisions.

Sharma, 2015, signifies the role of media in the abolition of a number of malpractices occurring in the society. Although women have proved their potential in every aspect of the society and nation but there are a number of issues associated with women empowerment that still remain unaddressed. Issues such as malnutrition, property rights, illiteracy, domestic violence, sexual harassment,

child abuse are big hurdles in the path of women empowerment. Media can model a public opinion. Media persons are using both advanced and traditions methods of communication in this regard. Although an in-depth understanding and ethical presentation of the issue are characteristics that should be taken into consideration for women empowerment.

Narayana and Ahamad, 2016, uses the term “responsibility” instead of “role” of media in the eradication of various types of discrimination against women. An efficient media not broadcasts news but is also responsible for the distribution and interpretation of knowledge and innovations. According to them media is an important component of our lives without any doubt and it can play a significant role in women empowerment and gender equality.

Jayalakshmi, 2016, assessed the problems associated with life of women in Indian society and the role of media in women empowerment. Role of women as mother, sister or wife is very important for the family and the society. In spite of this fact women have to face numerous inequalities both in family and society. Although our Constitution has all the measures to overcome such inequalities, the position of women in our society is not as expected. Media can sort out these imbalances as it is an effective tool for framing the opinion of the people and thus for women empowerment.

Bala, 2017, discussed the significance of women empowerment in dealing with the present condition of women in the society. Various components of media such as books, magazines, journals, novels, newspapers, television, movies, mobile phones, internet etc play an important supportive role in the process of women empowerment. Its helping presence cannot be sidelined as it can accelerate the process of women empowerment by generating awareness about various issues in general public very effectively.

Premlata and Jukariya, 2018, in their study conclude that media’s role in women empowerment is very significant. Media is an effective practical method of propagation of knowledge, skills and healthy socio-economic concepts. This can effectively contribute to social and economic empowerment of women.

Gupta, 2018, viewed the media and women empowerment interrelationship in a different aspect. On one hand media plays a very important role in the development of women and on the other hand the increase in employment and education with women empowerment has benefited the growth of media as well. Thus media is also helping itself by women empowerment. Media in itself is an effective tool for women empowerment but the advancements in the field of communications and IT has further enhanced its efficacy.

Sharma, 2020, mentions the efficiency of media in effective women empowerment. Media gives information about various issues, contradictions associated with the issues, suggests possible solutions to issues and on an overall basis creates awareness among the people, community and society. Women empowerment can be effectively implemented by raising fundamental problems, forming correct public opinion by fair and ethical presentation of women and their issues in media.

Discussion and suggestions

The real time situation clearly indicates the reality of women status in Indian society. They are still victims various social evils in spite of constitutional rights, laws, policies and plans made by the government. Thus women empowerment has become a necessity of present time for the development of the society and the nation. However, it is a difficult task to assess the status of women empowerment prevailing in the country. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific has suggested a few indicators of women empowerment (Guleria, 2010). Health, education, harassment, violence etc are considered as social indicators. Laws, rights, policies and plans of government for women, reservation for women etc. are the political indicators. Self-reliance status, occupation and financial aspects are the economic indicators. International cooperation, sports, celebrity, pictures of women and girl child indicate the level of women empowerment of a nation.

Based on the thorough review it is clearly evident that media plays a pivotal role in every aspect of life. Media is an effective medium of circulating information in quick time. Due to its potential of reaching vast number of people in rural

and urban areas, it has proven to be very helpful in spreading awareness for various issues of social and national interest. Sensitive issues have also been handled with utmost responsibility by media. Media can easily form and reform the perception of people and thereby bringing about change in the conduct and actions. General public whether rural or urban utilize media for entertainment, information and education. Education is most significant apparatus for implementing various forms of women empowerment and media's supportive role in spreading education and awareness is well understood. Government and its various agencies, NGOs and private organizations are successfully utilizing various forms of media i.e. print or communication or social media for various purposes (Akhter and Naheed, 2014). Media has successfully promoted concepts of education, gender equality, and rights for women etc. However, along with the ethical presentation of women and other issues, media has been associated with some false propagandas in the past concerning the empowerment of women. Not all forms of media are presenting women in modern context. Print media such as newspaper is presenting a more positive aspect whereas the visual media such as television are not representing the positive aspect to a large extent. This can mainly be attributed to the fact that as visual media is more based on public opinion for maximum profit rather than forming public opinion (Kumar and Varghese, 2005).

Today's media is more focused on the commercial and financial events rather than on social events. Money earning information circulation is the current trend of media functioning. For example, celebrity gossips are part of everyday news. The negative approach of representation of women is clearly evident. This representation is suggestive of the false notion that women are basically for taking care of children and family and they have no role to play in the socio-economic development of the country. They seldom raise issues pertaining to women empowerment (Patowary, 2014). Media are presenting a stereotype traditional image of women rather than presenting them as modern and educated intellectuals. This erroneous presentation of women's image is in no way the real time situations of today's women.

Media should target various issues of gender inequality, education, poverty, health and safety issues, family and organization issue which directly influence the women empowerment.

Although media and all the new technological advancements can significantly amplify the process of women empowerment but these can be effective only in the presence of skills and opportunities to use them. Loiseau and Nowacka, 2015, proposed 3 approaches for efficient use of media in women empowerment-

- Providing training to women so that they can easily use the latest media and communication technology. Equality in usage of these technology will simultaneously increase media's participation in women empowerment.
- Women's involvement in decision making and leading media organization can be very effective as women themselves can represent their problems with more efficacy than male counterparts.
- Motivating and involving men and other non-traditional partners can strengthen the process of women empowerment.

Media should also design its functioning according to the requirements of women so that they are benefited. Women are mostly concerned with educational and job opportunities, latest research events, social support system, financial activities, child and health care, arts and entertainment etc. i.e. the events of their own interest. It will increase not only increase the usage of media but simultaneously will help in the empowerment of women.

Incorporating all the above mentioned approaches and aspects in the women empowerment campaign can be very effective. However media should also focus on other aspects. While handling issues related with women, media's approach should be precise, factual, realistic and above all ethical. Utmost care should be taken in presentation of women in all forms of media and in no way they should be represented in orthodox traditional manner. In this way media can effectively participate and augment women empowerment and thereby help in the development of the society and the nation.

Conclusion

Social, economic, educational, political and legal empowerment is a huge task. To change the

existing structure of the male dominated society will not only take time but also dedicated efforts. Focused efforts can lead us to our objective of women empowerment. Media can be our effective tool in this regard as it reaches out to a large number of audience, facts presented by media are easily accepted by a large proportion of population and it can easily model the opinion of general public for a particular issue. But it is also a well-established fact that media can exploit any news, information or fact for its own benefit. In view of this ethical functional of media should be emphasized for socio-economic development of society and nation. Only a small portion of women population are benefited from women empowerment plans and policies, large portion is still awaiting these benefits. It is not the responsibility of the media alone for empowering and presenting women. Media can only play a supportive role but the necessity is to change the mentality of general public towards such sensitive issues.

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