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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Media is the mirror of society and it reflects the happening of society. Media is known as the fourth pillar of democracy. The media has a role and responsibility to create awareness among women for the betterment of society. Today's there are different types of media like print and digital media conveying the message to society. It is observed that there is a lack of coverage in all media of women's issues like sex ratio, wage disparities, literacy rate, crime against women etc. It is the media's responsibility to disseminate all information, knowledge, and news to the large community. All government and non-government organizations are also responsible for the prevention of discrimination against women. Women empowerment is very important for social development. The current paper is focused on the different types of media, how digital media helped women's empowerment. Women's participation in decision-making through the media increased.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the emerging concerns, along with health, communalism and increasing gender violence (crime against women), is the implication of the media's projection of women. Media today is an extremely powerful instrument reaching out to millions of people. Modern technology has vastly increased the outreach of media, with its impact on both men and women; young and old. Print, radio, electronic, television, theatre, films, the internet, and now social are all constituents of media. Both the forces advocating change and those supporting traditional values have been using different media forms to project their views and influence the attitude and behavior of people. The outreach of media has been generating serious concern. "More frightening than the direct reach of media, however, is its indirect influence. By gradually shaping public opinion, personal beliefs and even people's self-perception, media influences/impacts the process of socialization and shapes ideology and thinking also" (Bhasin and Agarwal: 9). The use of media to portray women and give suggestions about her 'preferred' role is not a new phenomenon, nor are the protests against the media depiction of women.

In the pre-independence period i.e. before 1947, women's organizations had protested against the portrayal of women as beautiful dolls and overexposure of her body. However, the Victorian hourglass figure gave way to the pencil-thin flapper. In our country where literacy is not widespread and the culture of oral traditions has prevailed, the print media has limited influence as well as impact. Thus the press is not the most important means of communication i.e. message containing information; sending or receiving information. Yet, because of the power structure which is dominated by those with access to education, the written word carries weight. As a result, it is a matter of concern for women's groups that certain serious issues get coverage in the print media. In the early decades after Independence (post-colonial period), audio-visual media such as broadcasting and cinema were predominant vehicles for projecting an image of a woman and articulating gender issues. Whereas broadcasting was controlled by the State, cinema was predominantly dominated by the private sector, though some control of the state was exercised through the Censor Board. Television-Doordarshan (DD) was first introduced in India in the Sixties (1963) when it was completely under government control.

The programmes were designed, monitored, and relayed through State-controlled media. Today though, DD continues to be State-owned, there has been a proliferation of channels that are privately owned and are having international control. After the onset of the policy of structural adjustment and India being thrown open to the world market, media has also been considerably influenced in its ownership, management content, and outreach. Both the electronic, print, and social media have been considerably influenced by globalization and market forces, and so the ownership, the form content, and the purpose of media have been seriously affected, which is a matter of grave concern.

Digital Media: Digital media helps us to give the worldview, knowledge, and information about all the good and bad incidents and also about the customs, traditions, and lifestyle of the society. Media is playing a vital role in shaping the ideas, thoughts, and values of individuals in particular and society in general. Adolescents are being most fragile and vulnerable. There is a sufficient number of studies to show how media is perceived as responsible. Media is perceived to have acquired a negative image by showing frequent sexual intimacy at an early age, pre-marital sex, promoting live-in relationships, changing sexual partners, unfaithful to partner or spouse, and a person with no moral values. Television is perceived to encourage teens to start marital life early. Adolescents are found to be heavy consumers of sexually-oriented media products, including magazines, comic books, music videos, movies, blogs, YouTube, compact discs, mobile and more recently, the internet and so on. The relationship between the media and adolescents is a dynamic one that reflects changes in the larger social and behavior environment. Media plays a very important role in creating awareness. Certain issues remain untouched among adolescents as they feel guarded concerning them. Media helps in providing information regarding such as current affairs, social and burning issues. Many such topics are highlighted by the media. The current one that can be talked about is the quota system in colleges. Media created awareness that how injustice was being done with deserving candidates due to reservations in colleges. There was a procession taken out by students to object regarding this bias discrimination.

Digital media are those channels of communication (TV, radio, newspapers, and the internet) that enable a source to reach and influence a large audience. Digital modes are often the vehicle through which popular culture is delivered to people. "YouTube will be for bigger than TV". – Sunrar Pichai (Google CEO). India has more than 650 million internet users in 2018 due to the fast adoption of digital technology and is predicted will have 800 million by 2022. Overall most of them adolescents are techno-savvy (proficient in the use of modern technology). Today's global face of time is decorated behind the mask of artificial perception about freedom. The new face of adolescents is a great mystery. Cyber is a small way to express through blogs and forums or social networking to reach the space. Adolescent movement concerned with countering the perceived dominance of men in the use and development of Information & Communication Technology (ICT), is the correct meaning of cyber adolescents. E-media is a modern form easily available to interact with the world. It has provided a new platform to express their feelings to all adolescents. It has been created a golden opportunity for personality and existence. New technology, new identity, new image, and comprehensive understanding of adolescents are

the new school of thought. It is like a utopia because this cyberspace belongs to adolescents who are liberal, self-radiant. The adolescent has entire freedom from being a teenager, being body-race-caste-religion-nationality-socioeconomic status; adolescent is free from all these labels. But this cyber world is not a utopia in reality. The adolescent has to be conscious about emotions-feelings; body race-caste-religion-nationality-socio-economic status unless this reality is known to adolescent will not be balanced with mind, body, and soul. Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) is used to take another step forward - enabling action. It means providing a supportive environment that will enable people to initiate and sustain positive behavior. A case that can be considered a positive outcome for adolescents has been discussed and highlighted. Cyber has made it noticeable how teenagers worldwide are coping with new technology and creating their own identity on the digital platform. Today adolescents are using social media, websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp to express views and have interactions with others. Today the time has changed entirely. Now adolescents are becoming techno-savvy. They are using the smartphone very smartly. Online Self Help Group (SHG), group chat, a social network forum, discussion forum, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter through all these they are manifesting themselves.

Role of Digital Media towards Women Empowerment: Digital media is having a very vital role in women's empowerment. Digital media should highlight the important burning following issues of women and create awareness in society.

Gender wage gap and wages discrimination: As per Article 16 of the Constitution of India, all citizens have a right to equality of opportunity concerning matters of public employment or appointment to any office under the state. Article 38(2) strives to minimize inequalities in income among individuals and Article 39 promises equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Gender Wage Gap is defined as the difference between the median earnings of men and women, i.e, it considers all men and women who fall under the ambit of paid employment. According to the Gender Gap Index in 2020, India has slipped to the 112th position from the previous 108th in 2018. Women generally get lower salaries than men for doing the same work. The media should make awareness of wage discrimination among the society.

Crime Against Women (CAW): The Crime in India-2019 report shows that A total of 4,05,861 cases of crime against women were registered during 2019, showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018 (3,78,236 cases). The majority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under 'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives' (30.9%) followed by 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty' (21.8%), 'Kidnapping & Abduction of Women' (17.9%) and 'Rape' (7.9%). The crime rate registered per lakh women population is 62.4 in 2019 in comparison with 58.8 in 2018. Digital Media should highlight issues regarding domestic violence, crime against women through social networks, Facebook, Whatsapp and create awareness among the society.

Decline Sex Ratio: As per SRS Report, 2018 shows the sex ratio at birth in India, declined marginally from 906 in 2011 to 899 in 2018. The sharp decline in sex ratio as pointed by Census 2011 data called for urgent action. Coordinated and convergent efforts are needed to ensure the survival,

Table 1. Different Forms of Media

Different Forms of Media	
Category	Forms of media
A. Print Media (e-mode)	Magazine, Billboards, Posters, Books, Hoardings, Wall writing, Wall Painting, Stickers, Handbills, Booklets/Flip Charts /Brochures, Pamphlets, Advertisements, Flipbooks, Fliers (leaflet, handout, circular), Mobile exhibition vans
B. Electronic Media	Music, Discussions, Dramas, and Commentary of important events or games, Radio spot, TV commercial, Documentary, Video vans, Display boards in railway stations, Bus stands, Airport, Advertisements, Motion pictures, Audio recordings, Cinema slides, Film and Video.
C. New Media (Computer-Mediated Communication) also known as Digital Media	Digital media, Internet, Short Message Service (SMS) campaigns, E-mail (Mailers), Online chat, Webwork, Mobile phones, Smartphone, Laptop, Android Tablets, iPod, Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) system, 4G Mobile, Smart Phone, Bluetooth, Web browser, MyGov, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Edmodo, Blogger, Skype, Pinterest, Google Hangout Social networking service, Facebook, Twitter, eBay, Google classroom, YouTube (2nd largest search engine platform due to does not reveal identity), Vimeo (profession video), daily motion.
D. Artforms (e-mode)	Street Plays ('Nukkad Natak'), Ventriloquism-Talking Monkey Shows, Magic Shows/Other Local, Folk art, Art Forms, Folk and classical forms of music and dance, Visual arts, Puppetry (puppet show), Theatre, Exhibitions, 'Prabhat Pherry', Rally, School Competition, Signature Campaign
E. Organising Contests Online	Quiz contests, Painting & Drawing contests, Song and skit competitions, Essay competition.
F. Awareness training for Associations and Group on various issues	Residents Associations, Trade Unions, Schools, Colleges, Institutions, Universities
G. Interpersonal Communication (IPC) or Interpersonal Media	Telephone, Internet, Videos Websites, Awareness Campaigns, School, College and university-based programs, Local Media, Social Media (Friends group sites)
H. Audio-Visual Aids	Slides, Flip Chart, Models, Films & Videos, Projectors, Blackboards/Whiteboards, Smart classroom

protection, and education of the girl child. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched on 22nd January 2015 in Panipat, Haryana to address the issue of decline in CSR and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum.

Early Marriage (Child Marriage): The legal age of marriage for a girl is 18 years however, 36.8 percent of girls are married off before attaining 18 years of age and the median age of the girls at the first marriage is 17.2 years. Child marriage results in a lack of opportunity for education, sexual exploitation, violence, and early pregnancy. It deprives the girl children of their childhood and poses serious health risks for them.

Literacy rate: Census 2011 reveals that 65.46% of women are literate. The NSSO data shows a huge disparity between urban and rural populations. About 64% of rural males and 45% of rural females were literate. The literacy rates among their urban counterparts were much higher at 81% and 69% respectively.

Female Infanticide and Foeticide: The killing of a girl child after birth has been observed in Indian society and was first discovered way back in 1789.

- The census of 2011 has recorded the lowest ever sex ratio of 914 in the age group 0-6 years with 3 million missing girls; from 78.8 million in 2001 to 75.8 million in 2011.
- Female foeticide is due to strong son preference, the practice of dowry, and the patrilineal necessity of an heir.

Malnutrition

- Both boys and girls are almost equally likely to be undernourished. For the girls, the nutritional intake is relatively inferior both in terms of quality and quantity. The health of the girls also suffers due to the additional burden from early and multiple pregnancies.
- Due to patriarchal society, boys are given relatively more nutritious food as they are deemed breadwinners of the

family, especially if the family is poor and is not in a position to provide nutritious food to all the children.

- Poor nutritional status of women during the reproductive period is responsible for the under-nutrition of children.

Education

- There is a wide gender disparity in access to primary and secondary education. Its elimination has been accepted as the starting point for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- There are several factors responsible for the dropping out of the girls from schools such as early marriage, household works, assisting the family members, looking after siblings, distant schools, lack of female teachers, lack of toilet facilities, etc.

Health and Mortality

- The under-five mortality of boys reduced to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births. The under-five mortality of the girl child is 40 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Numbers are still high if compared to International standards which saw a girl child survival rates are 11 percent higher than boys.
- Neglect and Discrimination
- Neglect and discrimination against girls deny them their basic human rights. To a large, It is socially sanctioned by the norms of our society which denies a girl child personal autonomy, entitlements to proper and balanced food, education, healthcare, and other growth opportunities.
- The discrimination is amply reflected in the gaps in child sex ratio, educational attainment, child marriages, health, malnutrition, IMR, MMR, and other development indicators.

Underrepresentation of key positions: There is an under-representation of women in key positions like Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, Panchyat, etc. Reservation for women in Lok Sabha can be provided to enhance women's participation in policymaking on the lines of reservation of

seats for women in local self-government which created millions of grassroots women leaders. This will ensure more empathetic policy making to deal with issues concerning women. Media is having a very vital role in the empowerment of women, but the usage of media by Indian women is very low especially digital. Media can disseminate information to urban women on the issues like employment and job prospects, research, education opportunities, health care, etc. and for rural women like employment, Healthcare, Educational facilities, the Dowry system, other legal rights of women, etc. The media should enable the projection of women in a decent and dignified way and promote respect and dignity to women avoiding the negative picture of women. Decent presentations of women must be introduced through the media.

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