Volume: 3 Issue: 6 Pages: 26-29

Gender Stereotypes on Social Media

[*1] Robina Akther

[*1] Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India.

Article Info.
E-ISSN: 2583-6528
Impact Factor (SJIF): 5.231
Peer Reviewed Journal
Available online:
www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 10/May/2024
Accepted: 11/June/2024

***Corresponding Author**
Robina Akther
Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India.

Abstract
Gender stereotypes continue to exist and are transmitted through media, and through social, educational and recreational socialization, which promote gender prejudice and discrimination. The paper outlines different aspects of gender stereotyping and their impact on women's career progressions from a managerial perspective, which engages with the critical theories of gender studies. Social media have become an integral part of our lives. These digitally networked media technologies are used to maintain social relationships, share information, or look for jobs. The peculiarity about social media is that users not only passively consume content but can in fact actively participate in shaping them. Girls and women use social media more often to share personal and creative content; they are particularly active on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. Boys and men use social media more often to play games and exchange opinions; they are mainly active on YouTube and Twitter. The paper contributes to existing literature by identifying the antecedents of gender stereotypes and their impacts on the career progressions of women.

Keywords: Gender, media, stereotypes.

Introduction

Gender stereotypes are characterized as views about specific attributes that distinguish between how men and women should or should not be (prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs). These views usually pertain to roles, behaviors, physical attributes, and occupations (Johar *et al*. 2003, Leaper 2015). According to Perry and Pauletti (2011), gender ideologies are collections of prescriptive stereotypes that dictate how men and women should behave or what kind of person they should be. Gender norms and beliefs have a strong impact on various facets of our mental health, such as perceptions, memory and focus, social interactions, hobbies, and self-perceived abilities. (Ruble *et al*. 2006) [1].

Like with other belief systems, youth pick up on the gender norms expected of them by those in their immediate environment, such as parents, teachers, and friends. For a number of reasons, the mainstream media offers particularly potent examples of gender norms. First, there are hundreds of models available in the media, far more than the handful of role models that young people might know from their peers or families. Additionally, media characters tend to be more "attractive" than average in terms of appearance, confidence, and power, which raises the possibility that they will be viewed as aspirational role models. (Greenwood 2016). Second, the media help shape norms both directly, through individual models, and indirectly, through their impact on the values that parents, peers, and teachers adopt and transmit (Brown *et al*. 2005). Third, media consumption levels are very high among youth generally and among adolescents in particular, with these populations reporting 4 hours and 44 minutes and 7 hours and 22 minutes of daily media use, respectively (Rideout & Robb 2019). Finally, media content is believed to be especially well suited for social learning processes because it features simplistic, often one-dimensional models of rules and behaviors that appear regularly (Signorielli 2012). We do not anticipate that media are the only source shaping gender stereotypes but believe they are likely a significant one (L. Monique, 2020).

India in the 21st century is fast becoming a country where the internet, television and cell phones are ubiquitous. These have penetrated the villages and small towns in India with only a few remote places left untouched. In the past few decades, the media has increasingly become an important agent of socialization. One way in which the media affects our worldviews is through perpetuating and reinforcing stereotypes. The characters we see on television and other media are often very straightforward and stereotypical. Depictions of straightforward characters make it easy both for

the producers to illustrate their stories as well as the audiences to understand them. These depictions however perpetuate and maintain stereotypes (Bleich *et al*, 2015) [3].

A stereotypical image of a social group that ignores diversity is one that is oversimplified and generalised. It frequently contains both good and bad things about the group members and sets expectations for them. But if contradicting information is presented, these stereotypes might also evolve over time. He meets a young woman while on the job. He assumes the young woman won't make a good leader based on his early impression of her and the stereotype that is currently in circulation. He might quickly come to the conclusion that the stereotype is not entirely true and that the young woman actually possesses strong leadership abilities after speaking with her. Subsequently, the man might think twice before updating his negative perception of ladies. This may result in bias and prejudice which is manifested in negative feelings towards women including emotions, such as contempt or pity (L. Monique, 2020).

While many biases and barriers related to gender have decreased over time, gender stereotypes still hinder women's career advancement. Gender stereotypes continue to have a detrimental impact on women's access to opportunities for career advancement. These stereotypes influence managerial behaviour and occupational outlooks in the workplace with patriarchal expectations. Globally, women only make up 29% of senior management positions (IBR, 2020). According to the World Economic Forum (2017), there is an average gender gap of 32.0% in four areas: "political empowerment," "health and survival," "educational attainment," and "economic participation and opportunity" (Naznin, 2021).

Social media now plays a vital role in our daily lives. These social media platforms are digitally networked and are used for job searching, information sharing, and social relationship maintenance. One unique feature of social media is that users can actively shape content rather than just passively consuming it.

Social media are networks (such as Facebook, Xing, LinkedIn, Diaspora), platforms for sharing pictures and videos (such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitch, TikTok, Snapchat, Mattermost), and messaging services (such as Twitter, Mastodon).

- Statistically, more than half the people in Germany use social media–though not all of them equally: who uses what and, above all, how often, varies according to gender and age.
- Girls and women use social media more often to share personal and creative content; they are particularly active on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. Boys and men use social media more often to play games and exchange opinions; they are mainly active on YouTube and Twitter.
- People between the ages of 25 and 39 are most active on social media. Whereas Facebook is also used by people over the age of 70, TikTok is the medium with the youngest users: in 2019, there were one million users between the ages of 6 and 19.

The Return of Gender Stereotypes

Social media open up space for diverse (self-) representations of gender and (political) attitudes towards it. Nevertheless, they do not reflect at all the wide-ranging diversity of genders but mostly convey traditional images of men and women. Existing gender stereotypes are even reinforced.

- **Body Images:** Picture-based platforms like Instagram (re)produce gender-normed body images. Before posting a picture, 94 per cent of women and 87 per cent of men optimise this photo at least once. This means that they edit the picture with filter apps in order to conform to a female or male ideal of beauty.
- **Gender Roles:** Social media has an impact on personal attitudes towards gender roles. The more intensively young people use Instagram, YouTube, etc., the more conventional and stereotypical they think about the allocation of roles between men and women. This has been shown, for instance, in a survey among 14-to 32-year-olds.
- **Opinion Formation:** Female You Tubers receive more negative comments to their videos (including sexist, racist, and sexually aggressive hate speech) when compared to male You Tubers. With this form of gender-based digital violence, some users push people out of social media (silencing) and prevent them from further expressing themselves and shaping public opinion.

Stereotypes in Media

Many media messages that define what it means to belong to a social group-be it gender, caste, race, etc.-are repeated to us on a daily basis. The way we view ourselves and the world around us is influenced by these media representations. Content analysis is a key instrument for comprehending media representations. In order to find patterns, this entails methodically going over the content. However, the process is very difficult, requiring one to examine thousands of print pages and delve deeply into radio, television, and other media archives. We can now conduct more in-depth analyses and broaden our knowledge of media representations thanks to the use of sophisticated computer software. (Ward 2020) [2].

Stereotypical images of women, ethnic groups, older adults, people with disabilities, and many other groups are prevalent in the media, according to research employing tools like content analysis. These representations in the media differ in two ways. While the second dimension relates to the quality of representation (positive/negative), the first dimension relates to the quantity of representation (underrepresentation/overrepresentation). Numerous factors, including cultural, social, political, and economic ones that change over time and space, have an impact on both of these dimensions. For example, in the past, certain groups-like homosexuals-have been glaringly underrepresented in the media, and even when they were, their representation was almost always negative. Nonetheless, there has been a rise in their media representation, and they are currently shown in more favourable light (Ward, 2020) [2].

Different theoretical stances that look at "what" and "how" images will be presented to the public can be used to understand both the quantity and quality of representations. The gatekeeping theory, which concentrates on "what" will be made available to the public, is one viewpoint. According to the theory, media outlets play the role of gatekeepers, selecting what stories to cover and which ones to ignore. According to the agenda setting theory, which is an alternative viewpoint, the media sets the agenda by focusing on a limited number of issues. As a result, these issues are seen as more significant by the public than others. The visibility of communities of Vietnamese and Indian origin in four regional North American newspapers was investigated in a study conducted by Bloemraad and Hamlin (2015). The study found no link between demographic patterns in the region and media coverage of certain groups (Bleich *et al*, 2015) [3].

Gender Stereotypes

The majority of Indian society is patriarchal. Women are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and men are the primary power. Stereotypes about men are embodied in a cluster known as "agentic," which includes traits like strength, self-assurance, and independence. A "communal" cluster comprising traits like emotional, helpful, and compassionate traits is used to symbolise stereotypes about women's attributes (Eagly and Steffen, 1984). According to Eagly and Mladinic (1994), stereotypes of women are linked to communal traits that fit them for lower-status roles and household duties, while stereotypes of men are linked to high-status roles. (Bleich *et al*, 2015) [3].

The belief systems that have been mentioned above have been reinforced and maintained in large part by the media. As far as gender stereotypes in the media are concerned, there are two clear underlying trends. (Oliver, Hoewe *et al*., 2014) [8]

The first pattern is that female characters continue to be underrepresented in contrast to male characters (Smith & Granados, 2009, as cited in, Oliver and Raney, 2014) [8]. In the 1950s through 1970s, there were only 20 to 35 percent female characters on US television, according to a content analysis study (Gunter, 1995) [6]. Though there were still twice as many men on screen by the middle of the 1980s, there were more women playing major roles. As long as women are still marginalised in the media, things appear to have stayed the same. Furthermore, while these studies have been conducted in Western nations, similar trends have also been reported in several Indian reports. A 2021 United Nations study evaluated gender disparity in India (UN Women, 2021) [7].

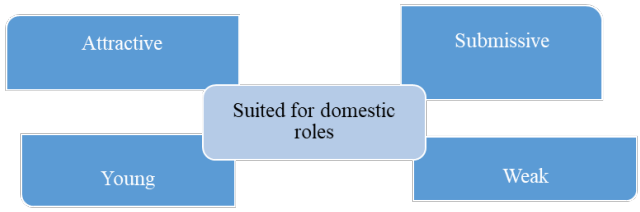
2) Stereotypical depictions of female characters in the media are the second pattern that becomes apparent. Women are typically depicted in these representations as having domestic responsibilities and are praised for their youthful beauty. Jain and Pareek (2018) [4] noted that the bulk of representations of women were of them performing housework in 30 TV serials that aired between 1990 and 2016 as well as 14 new and old TV ads. Jain and Pareek cite films from before the 1990s, such as Pati Parmeshwar (1988) and Dahej (1950), in which wives are portrayed as obedient spouses who make sacrifices for their own families. This also holds true for Indian television series, in which female characters are typically confined to the home. The division between the "good" and "bad" women is (UN Women, 2021) [7].

According to Laura Mulvey's gaze theory (1975), the male gaze in a patriarchal society dictates what will appeal to men, particularly heterosexual men, and this in turn dictates the content of films. Bollywood films feature "item number" songs, in which women are portrayed as sensual objects dressed in skimpy attire, attracting men's attention. In more recent times, the feminine gaze has taken the place of the male gaze, as men have stripped off their clothes for the voyeuristic enjoyment of women. However, these are unusual occurrences in Indian media (Laura, 1975) [5].

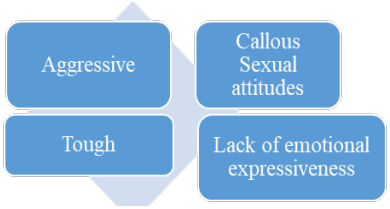
The unfavourable stereotypes that are propagated by the media have additional ramifications. Women and other members of marginalised social groups are typically aware of these stereotypes and understand that others may judge them unfavourably based on them. "Stereotype threat" can arise from this awareness when members of a stereotyped group perform below expectations in order to fit the unfavourable stereotypes. Academic performance and leadership are two areas where stereotype threat has an impact. It has been noted that women often perform worse than men in certain areas (like maths) once they become aware of the stereotype that says women are not as good as men in these areas. (Bleich *et al*, 2015) [3].

While most of the media portrays women in terms of stereotypes, it also tells us about strong, independent women who defy stereotypes and possess leadership qualities. Reports by ethical journalists also cover stories about female foeticide, crimes against women, lack of opportunities, and many other similar topics. Still, there aren't many of these tales (Bleich, 2015) [3].

In the past, women's media representation has been the main topic of discussion. But more recently, analysis has also been done on how men and masculinities are portrayed in the media. The social environment, in which the media is a prominent social force, also shapes men's conceptions of manhood and what it means to be a man. Connell's theory of masculinity (1995), which holds that there are various masculinities that exist in a hierarchy and vary over time and in sociocultural contexts, is one of the most influential theories in this context. For instance, in the same culture, some masculinity may promote men as being aggressive and strong, while others may promote men as being sensitive and sensitive to their emotions. Not just men are affected by these masculinities. According to Connell (1987) [9], men who embody the dominant masculinities in their culture are held in high regard and given authority and social standing. This type of masculinity, which varies depending on the context, is typically represented in most societies by the aggressive, tough, callous, and emotionally flat "hypermasculine ideal" that excludes women from sexual relations. In cartoons, movies, TV shows, ads, and other media, these kinds of images are commonly seen. The public is led to believe that these are the only behaviours appropriate for men and that expressing other emotions, such as crying, is weak and feminine when depictions of such hypermasculine men appear in the media (Connell, 1987) [9]



a) Girls



b) Boys

Fig 1(a) & (b): Showing Stereotypes associated with women and men

The discussion above demonstrates a common pattern in which women are primarily valued for their communal roles that emphasise domestic roles, sexuality, and appearance, while men are portrayed in the media as having agentic roles. Additionally, the hypermasculine ideal is used by the media to portray the hegemonic or dominant group. People, who identify as others, like women, gays, or queer people, are frequently marginalised. For media audiences, media

representations are frequently seen as the standard. This affects our perceptions of ourselves and other people in society in a variety of ways. It can result in problems for the person, including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and body dissatisfaction. There is evidence that the presence of stereotypes in the media can create a threat to the stereotype, which lowers the performance of the stereotyped group. While most media content still perpetuates these stereotypes, some media have started to feature diverse and non-stereotypical characters. Furthermore, the media has begun to offer a forum for diverse groups to challenge stereotypes and validate their own identities. Positive media portrayals or counter stereotypes like these have the power to alter negative stereotypes (Oliver, 2014) [8].

Conclusion

Stereotypical images of various groups are used by the media to misrepresent them. The media still has a dearth of female representation. They are also praised for their youthful appearance and are typically portrayed in domestic roles. The media also shapes men's perceptions of manhood and what it means to be a man. The media regularly portrays the "hypermasculine ideal" of toughness, aggression, callous sexual attitudes towards women, and a lack of emotional expressiveness. As a crucial component of sociocultural influences that may have an impact on wellbeing, media representations are consistently shown to be important by empirical research. Damaged images with carefully studied connections to negative consequences are still prevalent in a variety of media, notwithstanding some noteworthy advancement. Consistently negative effects on mental and physical health, as well as the promotion of violence, sexism, and gender inequality, seem to be associated with exposure to objectifying, sexualized, and stereotypical representations. Interventions that address body image and body satisfaction should consider their influence from a perspective. Policies meant to lessen their impact and the encouragement of institutional and organisational interventions may also work as a buffer against risks to one's physical and mental well-being.

References

1. Ruble DN, Martin CL, Berenbaum SA. Gender development. In Handbook of Child Psychology, Vol. 3: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development, ed. W Damon, R Lerner, New York: Wiley.6th ed. 2006; 3:858-932.
2. Ward L. Grower Petal. Media and the Development of Gender Role Stereotypes. Annual Review of Development Psychology. 2020; 2:177-99.
3. Bleich E, Stone braker H, Nisar H, Abdelhamid R. Media Portrayals of Minorities: Muslims in British Newspaper Headlines, 2001– 2012. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.* 2015; 41(6):942-962.
4. Jain R, Pareek J. Gendered Portrayals of Domestic Work in Indian Television. Journal of International Women's Studies. 2018; 19(6):106-117.
5. Laura M. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, Screen. 1975; 16(3):6-18.
6. Gunter B. Television and gender representation. London, UK: John Libbey, 1995.
7. UN Women. Gender representation in Indian news, 2021.
8. Oliver MB, Hoewe J, Ash E, Kim K, Chung M-Y, Shade DD. Media and social Groups. In M. B. Oliver & A. A. Raney (Eds.), Media and Social Life. Routledge, 2014, 81-97.
9. Connell R. Gender and power. Stanford, Calif. Stanford University Press, 1987.