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## EXAMINING GENDER DISPARITY IN MEDIA INDUSTRY: Obstacles, Effects & Path to Equality

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### ABSTRACT:

*It has been observed in recent years that there is a high number of women's involvement in media careers but this fact also cannot be denied that today also top positions in newsrooms are being dominated by men as compared to female journalists. The recent survey of population shows that men and women are almost equal in number, but gender biases have denied her 50% share in opportunities in the media industry. This study investigated the prevalence of gender disparity in media careers like journalism, television, radio, film, social media manager, editor, producer etc. This research tried to explore how women have been underrepresented in media industry, challenges faced by her in opportunities at senior level, how gender disparity in media impacts women, audience and media industry as well. Some recommendations & collective efforts which can lead to a path of equality.*

**KEYWORDS:** Media careers, Gender Disparity, women underrepresentation, pay discrepancy

### INTRODUCTION:

Media is a very source of mass communication. The information shared by the media plays a big role in shaping attitudes and changing public opinion in different matters. So, as a medium, different faces of media do play a major influential role in society. Media industry is broadly categorized into 4 major segments i.e., film, television, radio and print. Hence many career opportunities can be seen in the media industry such as journalist, social media manager, video editor, media planner, news anchor and many more. Despite an increasing number of women studying and entering the journalism profession, gender inequality is clearly visible in the media industry. Women continue to face significant barriers to safety, support and career progression and remain underrepresented in the sector. Gender disparity in the media industry is not limited to any one country or region but is a global issue.

In addition to underrepresentation & pay gaps, gender stereotypes & biases are prevalent in media content. Women are often seen for limited and stereotypical roles which reinforces traditional gender norms and expectations.

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The brief history of TV and Radio in India suggests that TV medium has been a part of the Indian Population's entertainment partner for almost 60 years and Radio for 90 years. The film industry has been on this soil for the last 108 years. Advertisement sector, though had a very small pie in the beginning, has reached a turnover of Rs15000 crore recently. In the Advertisement sector also we find women's representation more for cosmetic purposes than the integral part of the theme. Her beauty and grace is showcased more than her nature and temperament and intelligence.

In news channels also, you will find women working as reporters, newscasters, but not at the position of chief editor or on upper managerial level. Wherever you go through news stories around the world, she has consistently been assigned a secondary position. Her role as an expert in diverse areas of expertise is not placed equal.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

For writing this paper, I as a researcher have gone through following books & websites which enabled me to focus more on the subject matter.

"The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friden- published by W. W. Norton, Year of publication 1963: Betty Friden's writings in chapter 2 of his book states that the editorial decisions concerning women's magazines at the time were being made mostly by men.

According to one of articles published in the International journal of environmental Research and Public Health (MDPI) on NHI, it has been reviewed that the share of gender representation in the media appears to be frequently skewed toward men's representation and prominently features gender stereotypes. On a global scale, news coverage appears to mostly feature men, especially when considering representation as expert voices, where women are still underrepresented (24%) despite a rise in coverage in the last 5 years. Several analyses of television programs have also shown how representations of men and women are very often consistent with gender stereotypes. Girls were often portrayed as focusing more on their appearance, as well as being judged for their appearance. Representation in advertising prominently features gender stereotypes, such as depicting men in professional roles more often, while depicting women in non-working, recreational roles, especially in countries that show high gender inequality.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the challenges faced by women in the media industry, Current State of Gender Disparity in media industry, Impacts of Gender Disparity, Initiatives taken

to fill gender gap, Future Directions and Recommendations to be taken by society to reduce this gap.

RESEARCH MODEL / DESIGN:

The findings of this study offer a detailed picture of how **women’s** are underrepresented in the media industry despite the number of females entering the media profession are more in number as compared to males.

Research methodology has been adopted **for carrying out this study**: qualitative data from secondary sources such as reports, journals, websites & reviewed articles have been collected and analyzed.

**CURRENT STATE OF GENDER DISPARITY:**

Statistical overview of gender representation in various sectors of the media industry (e.g., film, television, journalism, advertising).

Media Careers	Women Representation
Radio Stations (As per EIGE’s Study)	34% - work as Top level decision makers 16%- Work at CEO Level
Journalist working in Selected Hindi Newspapers	Amar Ujala- 10.34% Dainik Bhaskar- 13.33% Dainik Jagran- 11.43% Hindustan- 14.29% Prabhat Khabar- 16% Punjab kesari- 11.11% Rajasthan Patrika- 11.11%
TV panelists and anchors	Hindi news channels- approx 16% English news channels- 18%
Television & Film	As Directors- 21.3% As writers-26.8% As producers- 26.2% As leading roles- 23.7%

**OBSTACLES FACED BY WOMEN IN MEDIA INDUSTRY:**

- Societal influences and gender stereotypes: Societal beliefs and stereotypes about gender roles often expect the men and women to perform the tasks attributable to them. For example,

**female anchors are not given the role of** debate on gender issues in news channels. This clearly indicates the gender disparity.

- **Unequal Representation:** Key positions in the media organizations are still dominated by men. The executive roles, decision making powers and leadership positions are filled by male populations. This limits the opportunities for females and their career advancement in the media industry.
- **Pay Discrepancy:** Historically it has been observed in the media industry women are paid less than the males counterparts for the similar role. This pay discrepancy may discourage women from pursuing careers in media.
- **Lack of mentorship and networking opportunities:** Continuous mentorship in technical terms is strongly required in media careers for career advancement but women face barriers in accessing mentorship and networking opportunities which hinders the growth of women in the media industry.
- **Work-Life Balance Challenges:** Media roles involve long working hours, working on weekends and tight schedules which indirectly pose a challenge for individuals particularly for **women's** to balance work with family responsibilities.
- **Absence of female voices:** women's perspectives and experiences often are overlooked in media narratives particularly when it comes to debate on hot topics like politics, gender issues, defense etc.
- **Lack of family support:** Many times in serials, films & commercial ads women have been portrayed as a product rather than a character to a person. Women have always been considered to attract the eye balls of buyers to generate more revenue. Due to this prevailing practical reality females lack family support to work in the media industry.

#### **EFFECTS OF GENDER DISPARITY IN MEDIA INDUSTRY:**

- **Effect on women's career advancement and professional development:** Underrepresentation of women in leadership roles & decision making in media narratives directly or indirectly affecting the women's career advancement and professional development particularly for women with high ambition.
- **Influence on media industry for innovation:** Not considering women in key roles like senior editorial positions & at board level which will impact the media industry surely to miss out the innovative ideas, perspectives and talent that women can bring on the table.
- **Economic Implications:** Gender pay gap in media industry where women are paid less than men for similar kind of work perpetuates economic inequality and financial insecurity for **women's** working in industry. This leads to discouragement on part of women working in

media industry.

- Impact on audience perceptions: Media plays a crucial role in forming the perceptions and opinions of the audience. Excluding **women's** from key roles and decision making may influence how audiences perceive contributions & capabilities of women in the society.
- Psychological Effects: Unbalanced representation and stereotypes in the media industry may lead to negative psychological effects on **women's** and girls who choose their career in media but stereotypes limit their employment opportunities for key roles.

### **LITTLE INITIATIVES TO FILL GENDER DISPARITY:**

The Indian advertising and marketing world has taken a few baby steps towards gender equality and inclusivity. Here we look at a few brand campaigns that tried to make a difference.

1. UNAIDS' The Mirror | Agency: FCB India
2. Bhima's Pure as Love | Agency: Animal
3. Elegant Steel's Nari Shakti - The Steel Within | Agency: FCB India
4. Mohey's Kanyamaan
5. Vim's Nazariya Badlo, Dekho Bartano Se Aage | Agency: Lowe Lintas
6. Saffola's Rakhna Heart ka Khayal | Agency: Mullen Lintas
7. Boondh's UnGender Menstruation | Agency: Schbang
8. Cadbury's Kuch Khaas Hai | Agency: Ogilvy India
9. Cadbury's Kuch Khaas Hai | Agency: Ogilvy India
10. Swiggy's Women's Day ad

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO FILL GENDER GAP IN MEDIA INDUSTRY:**

Addressing gender disparity in the media industry requires a multifaceted approach.

1. **Adaption of gender policy:** Many print media organizations have adopted gender policy but major differences have not been observed yet. Hence gender policy should be implemented in every organization of the media industry.
2. **Create Pay Equality:** As seen above, there exists a pay gap for the same work done by men and women. Media organizations should critically look after & create pay equality among men & women.
3. **Mentoring & Development programs:** Mentoring & development programs are a way to boost the careers of women whose skills may not yet be fully realized. This will open doors for women in the media industry for their career advancement.
4. **Diversity & Inclusion programs:** media companies must implement diversity & inclusion programs aiming at increasing representation of women in key roles such as directors, producers, writers & executives etc. This will create a culture of inclusivity

in media organizations.

5. News organizations must ensure women occupy all roles in the newsroom, including senior positions.
6. Strong commitment from **Management**: There should be strong commitment on part of top level management to bring equality in all aspects of media organizations.
7. Adoption and implementation of national indicators
8. **Ensure fair evaluations**: Setting a system of formal hiring and evaluation criteria for senior leaders can help break down entrenched systems that have led to unequal representation at senior levels.

### CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY:

The conclusion drawn from the above writing is:

- i. Undoubtedly gender disparity & women unequal representation prevails in the media industry.
- ii. There are multiple challenges which women have to go through if she is choosing her career in the media industry.
- iii. There are no equal opportunities for women which results in injustice to women in media business.
  - A. current affairs & hard core topics in debate like gender issues, defense etc are hardly headed by women officers.
  - B. In the Bollywood film industry directors, art directors, screenplay writers, action directors, Music director makeup artists are mostly men.
- iv. The requirements of a media job have always remained tough as it includes long working hours, extensive traveling, tight schedules etc.
- v. Pay discrepancy for the similar kind of work.
- vi. Few baby steps were taken by advertising agencies through innovative advertisements towards gender equality.
- vii. Addressing gender disparity in the media industry requires collective and integral efforts from organizations, individuals and society as well. Some actions that strictly need to be implemented include policies & initiatives to promote gender diversity, fostering inclusive workplace culture, challenging stereotypes and biases in the media content, ensuring fair evaluations, pay equality, mentoring & development programs.

Additionally, increasing representation of women in leadership positions and supporting initiatives that amplify women's voices can contribute to long-term change.

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