



Role of Media in achieving Gender Equality and Sustainable Development

Abstract

The role of media is very powerful in spreading awareness against crimes, bringing gender equality in all spheres and in eradicating extreme poverty. Today, women are aware of their rights and are empowered. Media has always been an important stakeholder in regard to societies reaching goals of development. So in order to ensure women's participation, media's role becomes extremely important. This paper has attempted to analyse how news media social media is helping in raising awareness about the issues and concerns related to women participation and sustainable development. It is evident that media has helped in achieving goal of peace, social inclusion and justice. Media has helped in promoting dialogue between culture and many religious groups. Media has also helped in empowering people particularly marginalized section of society. The point of all this is that media is to be taken seriously in development. Through the development framework and media exposure we can bring gender equality and peace in society. This paper discusses the role of media in achieving gender equality.

Keywords: Media, Gender Equality and Sustainable development

Introduction

On a global scale, we have always noticed that women and girls often fight against gender inequality. They always face discrimination, violence and inadequate access in public and private spheres. Fewer are known to this fact that women and girls are 16% less likely to have access to information communication technologies, such as mobile phone and computers (Texin, 2015). It is important to break down the all barriers which come in a way of gender equality. It is also very important to think about on a subject that empowerment is not just a social issue but also it is an economic one (Texin, 2015). In the present context, we can see that development often brings advantages as well as challenges. Sustainable development is the key for success (Siddegowda & Jagadish, 2013).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs". The word 'sustainable' means something which stays last long and 'development' means change which is needed and desirable for the welfare in society. It comprises both social and economic change which ultimate leads to improvement in society (Siddegowda & Jagadish, 2013).

Nowadays public institutions, development experts and the private sector are talking about "smart economics", and have started investing in Women. Investing in Women is really a smart strategy and the

most effective means to achieve poverty diminution. A prosperous nation can be built and objectives of sustainable development and economic growth can be achieved if there is impartial judiciary and proper law enforcement, which provides access and enactment to justice for women and girls.

Women are the most important agents to achieve all these variables, they are the magic multipliers because it can multiply the message and can reach large number of people very fast (Schramm, 1964). It further means that investing in women will cast a positive impact on other women and girls which will show growth in educational opportunities, it will certainly boost the GDP rate and per capita income will also be increased. Promoting women's participation in society will help to increase children's education, which in turn helps in decrease of child mortality rate.

Objectives and Methodology

- To highlight freedom of expression is both a means and goal of development.
- To analyse the role of media in spreading awareness against gender inequality.
- To examine the role of ICTs in promoting knowledge based information in society.

On the basis of secondary source of data, the paper has analyzed the core elements of proposed objectives. This paper has used analytic and descriptive research method to explore the topic. Based on critical observation, this paper has attempted to bring out the contribution of media in all spheres.

Role of Media and Sustainable Development

Information and public awareness are tools in making common masses to understand the concept of sustainable development and its importance in society. Initiatives by media and ICTs are highly commendable in empowering and engaging people about the issues. Not only through print media but through use of ICTs, media provides platform to experts, citizens to exchange their thoughts and ideas which can eradicate gender inequality and can establish sustainable development.

Due to advent of ICTs at such speed and on such a scale has brought a global economic and social revolution,. In this context, the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, which UNESCO also promotes as one of its major principal in bringing sustainable development. The Global Media Forum was one example of free exchange, sometimes critical and provocative, about how different stakeholders are impacting on media's role in sustainable development (Media in support of Sustainable Development and a Culture of Peace, 2015).

Media is the most powerful and pervasive medium that allude their messages into our consciousness of daily lives. On Television, we have watched Hillary Clinton declaring her to be one of the suitable candidates for U.S Presidential Elections and as well as Smriti Irani losing her prestigious post. Everywhere in media, women have gained prominence, but some have made significant stride towards gender equality and some have taken step backwards to portray women as subservience and objectified.

Promoting Gender Equality

Education is the primary source in eradicating gender inequality. Lack of education generates the problem of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market. Women's and girls' empowerment is essential in order to expand economic growth and promote social development. The full participation of

women in labour forces and equal opportunity to women in all spheres would contribute in national growth rates. Achieving parity in education is an important step toward equal opportunity for men and women in the social, political and economic domains.

In the 21st century, we should let women be whatever they desire to be. They should be allowed to choose any field whether it is engineers, doctors, lawyers etc. It's their choice and we should let them be what they want to be. Today's media has represented women wish to remain as women, yet be equal to men in other aspects, for example *Rani Mukherjee's role in movie Mardaani*. In order to be equal to men it is shown that they attempt to emulate men. The power of women should not be related with masculinity. The biological differences should be overlooked only then women empowerment can be amended. Femininity can be considered as the celebration of being women. This limitation though imposed by media cannot stop women because their futures are bright and barriers won't be able to resist them for longer period.

Today each and every sector has started acknowledging the women's participation in society. It is extremely important and progress will be hampered if women are not provided basic human rights such as right to own and inherit properties. We will surely face a lag in the development process if the implementation and enforcement related to violence against women is not eradicated. Today's society needs a women representative in each and every sector may be its law, politics, education or any other. Violence against women is spreading like epidemic, so here the role of women judges becomes important as they can seek their focus on complex issues pertaining to violence, they can take help of Media, NGOs, healthcare units and education partners to achieve the end result of sustainable development. Women should have adequate access to justice and basic human rights free from violence.

So in order to ensure women's participation, media's role becomes extremely important. Both news media social media is helping raise awareness about the issues and concerns related to women participation and sustainable development. Today top stories are produced in news rooms, the public itself become the active producers of information and the news broadcasted gains spotlight and starts trending. People themselves are concerned for the betterment of women yet larger initiative is required at the moment. Like imparting censorship on media puts a bar on freedom of speech and expression, similarly curbing the rights of Women also impacts the development process of the nation.

In order to achieve sustainable development and gender equality more and more information and public awareness campaigns should be run; as they will help the general public understand the concept and importance of women's participation. Media hence is that indispensable tool which can give practical meaning and help in relevance of this concept. Through the use of ICTs, broadcasting channels and print mediums, media provides a forum for open discussion between experts and citizens. Media empowers women through access to information and civic participation.

Development can only be achieved if people have access to information. Informed section of society is considered the most powerful one. It provides voice to the voiceless. Nadia Murad is the perfect example for that, she is a Yazidi who escaped sexual slavery and has become a spokesperson for those abused by Islamic State militants and helping in the process to achieve sustainable development for women, media has helped her to raise her voice against violence. Recently her name is being suggested for Nobel Peace Prize. Media has the power to conquer gender equalities. As it helps females to produce, material required to raise their unheard voices through freedom of speech and expression which makes gender inequalities visible.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment and sustainable development can only be achieved if women are provided equal opportunities, safety and freedom from violence, proper education and training, safe workplaces, ensuring health safety and transparency in community engagement and participation. Media has to ensure these things are amended by giving accurate reporting to the masses and the government and at present this is the biggest challenge in front of media. To conclude, media has been playing a important role in achieving development goals. There primary focus should be more on the developmental aspects rather than on the entertainment aspects of society. It has brought significant change in the society. Hence, the role of media in sustainable development and gender equality is very important and significant.

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