

Research Article

Analyzing Association between Gender Centricity and Media Literacy

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A B S T R A C T

UNDP has laid down clear sustainable development goals for the world to pursue and achieve to make it a better place to live. One such SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) is gender equality. There are many efforts being put in the world to achieve this goal and media has been playing a pivotal role by strengthening these efforts time to time. The recent rise of social media has further provided voice to the voiceless by highlighting the gender specific issues and sending it across to the billions of timelines in moments. With the rise, popularity and greater engagement of the people with the various media forms, knowing the levels of awareness of gender issues among the media users is of paramount importance. The objective of this research effort was to find out the association of the gender centricity and the extent of media literacy. The study was conducted on the college-going students of various state, central and private universities located in and around Delhi. Questionnaire was used as the tool for primary data collection and SPSS software as the data analysis tool. The findings suggested a weak association between the extent of media engagement and the gender centricity of the respondents. 'Gender Centricity' here has been referred to the actions of the respondents post consumption of media content for the purpose of this research. It also suggested that the university setup of the students played a decisive role in determining their response towards gender centric media content and their degree of gender centricity exhibited through their actions.

Keywords: Gender Issue, SDG, Awareness, Media Literacy

Introduction

Kofi Annan (1998) once said, "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance". This eloquent quote highlighting the significance of gender equality was delivered in the form of a speech during Kofi Annan's tenure as the Secretary-General of UN at a Conference on African

Women and Economic Development, in Addis Ababa. The quote, though brief, demonstrates the world's existing status and what ought to be done to change the prevailing state of affairs. In the quote of Kofi Annan, "gender refers to socially constructed differences between men and women" (Down to earth, 2014). This research paper is an attempt to unfurl the possible relationship between the idea of media literacy and gender issues awareness.

Gender Issues: Facts and Concerns

The World Bank Data on the population (2017) shows 49.556% of the total population to be that of women in the world making number of women in the world roughly the same as men. Gender inequality is one major obstacle in the path of human development. Despite consistent efforts since decades, the efforts have still fallen short of the requirements. The discrimination encountered by women is of multifarious nature and has had destructive consequences on the global affairs. It is not limited to one aspect of life, rather it spans across "health, education, political representation, labor market, etc. - with negative consequences for development" (UNDP, Human Development Report, n.d.). The gender related disparity is further highlighted in plenty of facts covered in this UNDP report, which further suggests that for every one dollar earned by men for some work, women earn 77 cents for the same work. It further claims that one in every three women has experienced physical or sexual violence or both. This makes it around 35% of the women in the world. Only 13% of the agricultural landholders in the world are women. Of all the women alive today, around 750 million are married even before they turn 18. Only 24% of the overall national parliamentarians in the world have been women (as of Nov 18). These are only a few of the many startling facts that bring to the fore, the plight of the women across the world. Eradication of this discrimination and gap bridging is not just important; rather it is a basic human right. "It's proven that empowering women and girls helps economic growth and development" (UNDP, n.d.). Therefore, it is imperative to pay special attention to the already persisting or increasing inequalities amongst the males and females and its various resultants. UN has been mindful about the various global concerns and has put gender equality in its to-do list and the results too have been startling. South Asian countries witnessed 40% fall in the rate of child marriage during 2000-2017 (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2018). This could not have been possible alone with the efforts of the international agencies. There have been numerous NGOs functioning since time immemorial yet the desired changes remained negligible. The increased impetus on gender equality in the past few decades has somewhat collided with the recent media boom. The greater penetration of media into the lives of the people has further spearheaded the feminist movements across the globe. 'Me Too' movement is one classic example of such popular and globally successful movement. This propels the idea of media literacy.

Media Literacy: Concept and Definition

As dynamic as the term media itself, media literacy is difficult to be expressed and contained in a few words. It also has had the tendency to evolve with time and progressing media

scenario. "Media Literacy is the ability to *access, analyze, evaluate* and *create media* in a variety of forms" (Center for Media Literacy, n.d.). Center for Media Literacy further elaborates that "Definitions, however, evolve over time and a more robust definition is now needed to situate media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21st century media culture". A popular movie, TV shows and books rating website called Common Sense Media describes Media literacy as "the ability to *identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending...*[and understand] huge amount of information from a wide array of sources" (Common Sense Media, n.d.). "Media literacy is deemed important in light of the increasing demand for active citizenship in democratic societies, stemming from developments such as globalization and individualization" (Kleemans & Eggink, 2016, p. 74) and this increasing presence and use of media in today's society emphasizes the importance of media literacy (Buckingham 2003). Aufderheide & Firestone state, "media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms" (1993, p.g.33). Mihailidis & Thevenin (2013) refer to media literacy as a vital and crucial skill in participatory democracy as it allows greater engagement of the citizens in the various democratic exercises by turning people into more critical thinking, effectively creating the message and communicating the same resulting in people becoming more efficient agents of social change". All the mentioned definitions placed great degree of emphasis on the need of the media literacy for a better functioning democracy and strengthened democracy is a pre-requisite for addressing any kind of gender specific issue in a society. Hence, it can be stated that media literacy bears a direct relationship with the resolution of gender specific problems in any society.

Media literacy is being taken up very seriously by various countries. The idea of an improved media literacy level is being addressed at the school level itself. It is believed that the role of teacher as a primary source of information is a matter of past (Bloom & Johnston, 2010). (Bloom & Johnston, 2010) further emphasize that there has been a shift in the focus from "one-way transfer of information to one that trains students how to participate in digital environments with intelligence, skill, and literacy" (p.g.113). The "individual learners are less reliant on an institution that "pushes" in formation to the learner and more interested, and likely, to "pull" their own learning from multiple sources" (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p.g.113). "What began as entertainment had turned into a legitimate educational experience." (Ching-Chiu & Polaniecki 2008, pg. 95). Keeping this in consideration, core principles of media literacy education were outlined by the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) in 2007. (Alvermann, 2008; Ching-Chiu and Polaniecki, 2008) claims that those

students who are more involved in the act of production of their own media content, such students become more savvy and keen consumers of media. Jenkins et al. (2009) (as cited in Bloom & Johnston, 2010) state that there are four forms of participatory culture, which includes- affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem solving, and circulations. Jenkins et al. (2009) further write that the new skills required for media literacy include: play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation. Similarly, a core principle of media literacy education, according to NAMLE (2007), is the exploration of "representations, misrepresentation and lack of representation". The more developed a student's media literacies the richer his or her online exchanges will be.

Realizing the role of media literacy in constructing conducive information exchange environment, there have been attempts to develop scales to quantify the otherwise an abstract idea of media literacy. (Arke & Primack, 2009) attempted to describe the development and testing of a pilot measure of media literacy.

The objective of the research work is to find out the association between the various aspects of media literacy and action stirred amongst the respondents. It is to find out the respondents' reactions towards gender issues specific information.

The study attempts to unearth the mentioned objectives through survey of college going (undergraduate and postgraduate) students. Two hundred respondents were chosen as the sample from various state, central and private universities in Delhi and NCR.

Findings and Conclusion

Some interesting findings emerged from the data analysis. Majority of the respondents consumed media for 1-2 hours in a day. The number of respondents with no media usage is also there albeit on the lower side. Cross-tabulation of estimated media consumption in a day and the gender of the respondents and consequent chi-square test result ($p > 0.05$) suggests the media consumption to be independent of gender. In the same way, the respondents pay similar attention to the media contents about gender

Table I. Theoretical Framework of Media Literacy (Arke & Primack, 2009)

Label	Domain	Item Code	Item(s)	Aufderheide	NAMLE Key Questions	Bloom
A	Recall	Recall	Factual recall items	Access	Content	Knowledge
B	Purpose	Purpose	Explain the purpose of the message	Access	Purpose	Comprehension
C	Viewpoint	Sender	Identify the sender of the message	Analyze	Author/Audience	Analysis
		Missing	What points of view may be missing?	Analyze	Author/Audience	Analysis
D	Technique	Technique	How does the sender attract and hold your attention?	Analyze	Techniques	Analysis
E	Evaluation	Evaluation	What attitudes or feelings are you left with afterwards?	Evaluate	Credibility	Evaluation
		Inference	What does the information suggest?	Evaluate	Credibility	Synthesis

Research Methodology & Objectives

The study aims at finding out the relationship between the level of media literacy and gender issues awareness. The media literacy parameters have been extracted from the popular and established definitions while the variables for gender issues have been taken from the variables used by UNDP in their studies and development reports. Five point Likert scale has been used for measuring the levels of media literacy and assessing the levels of awareness of gender specific issues. The study is conducted on youth aged 18-35 residing in Delhi. Close-ended questionnaires have been used to collect primary data from ($n=191$) respondents.

empowerment and pertaining to issues related to that ($P > 0.05$). In case of the gender of the respondents and medium preference, the p-value ($p < 0.05$) highlighting the dependency of one variable over the other. The males and females tend to have preferential choices regarding the media preference. The respondents share and/ or discuss and/or act on the message and that choice made by the respondents is independent of the gender ($P > 0.05$). This means the gender does not bear any influence on the course of action taken up by the respondents after receiving the message pertaining to gender issues and empowerment. Majority of the respondents claimed to have not been writing about the gender specific issues and a sizeable

number said that they write depending on various factors that may include the major incident or accident to have started the media debates surrounding the issues pertaining to women. The p-value ($p < 0.05$) in this case highlights that the association between the gender and the writing for gender specific issues is significant.

In terms of the media usage across the different universities across Delhi and NCR, it was witnessed that majority consumed media for 1-2 hours and sizeable number had more consumption than this. Private and state university students showed highest media consumption. The cross-tabulation and the chi-square test for association shows ($p > 0.05$) p-value to be higher than alpha. This indicates that the status of the universities bear no association with the duration of media consumption. The media preference however shows significant association ($p < 0.05$) i.e. the status of the university is a determinant of the preferred medium choice amongst the respondents. The data shows that the media content targeting gender empowerment and the issues surrounding is most attentively consumed by students studying in state universities and central university and is least amongst private university students. The p-value is lesser than the alpha value ($p < 0.05$) and hence shows significant association between the two variables. The respondents were also asked about the action taken up by them when they encounter such content on media. The data shows that the act of sharing, discussing and participation in further content creation was more prevalent in the government university students than the private university students and the p-value ($p < 0.05$) suggests shows significant association. There is however, a small contradiction highlighted in the data. The general attitude of the students towards media content of such character is taken in a different way in comparison to the news specific to particular campaigns pertaining to the issues highlighted. The act of sharing, discussing and being part of similar campaigns and direct and indirect associations with the various ministries appear to be high in case of the private university students. Probing into the same led to the finding that the private universities laid special emphasis on association with such campaigns for various marketing and non-marketing purpose. Also, a significant association between these. However, at individual level, the students of private university participated less in the content creation to create more awareness and information. They were more passive in comparison to the government university students but there was no significant association seen statistically ($p > 0.05$).

It can be summed up by stating that the higher the level of media literacy may not necessarily make one more centric and considerate towards the gender issues. Sharing the media content is a very basic phenomenon that has been perpetuated due to the deeper penetration of social

media into the daily lives and it is the act of participation and content creation that may be a suitable indicator to find out the true nature of the association between media literacy and gender centrality.

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