ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GENDER INEQUALITY
(A STUDY OF EDUCATED MUSLIM WOMEN IN BHOPAL)

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to find the role of Mass Media in modern society as it brings radical changes and improve social situations especially in women. Mass media is a communication whether it is written, spoken or broadcasted, it reaches a large audience. This includes mainly television, radio, newspapers, magazines and internet. Electronic media is undoubtedly replacing Print media due to tremendous technology up gradation and maximum access and outreach. When it comes to media and women's rights it is every single one of us can get involved and can amplify women's voices successfully and achieve equality. Educated Muslim women in Bhopal utilise social media to mobilise public attention in order to enhance the visibility of issues that often get lost in mainstream media. They also take part in conversations on their rights, issues and raise voices to address the, may it be issues like forced marriage, family violence, gender inequality, negative stereotype etc. Due to globalization of media, now women can cover their problems and story by themselves, make it public and turn it into media for consumption. No doubt media continue to have discriminatory attitudes towards women and mostly rely on male worldview when portraying women. Here we study what are possibilities in shape of social & traditional media that women particularly educated Muslim women in Bhopal can publicize their perceptions freely by breaking this vicious circle to achieve justice and equality in all walks of life.

Keywords: Mass Media, Social Justice, Equality, Educated Muslim Women.

Introduction

Media is considered as one of the constructive pillars of the society. The contemporary media has gone through tremendous changes in terms of content, style and approach and the journalistic scenario which is now not restricted to simply the printed letter, has widened its base by including the medium of broadcasting, telecasting and new media. Now in the age of internet, the journalism has lost the physical boundaries of transmission of news. The free flow of information and the competition among the owners of various media has shown careless haste in sole criteria of making news. (http://hdl.handle.net/10603/9427)[1]

The decline in the content of the media of every classification has ripped off the mask of decency and moral in the family. It is true that the profession is changing and it can be said that at present scenario most of the media organizations are becoming 'social entertainers' and profit making is the mantra for them.

The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Though the primary goal for women empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women but it has also deep ramifications in social, economic and political scenario of body polity. The media through its reach to people at large has been instrumental though not to the extent desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing neglect and marginalization of the position of the women in society. On the other hand, government is looking proactive in woman empowerment and gender inequity issues by framing certain policies which are turning things around in favour of female folk. Educated women revealed that women greatly feel that issues (where women have been the victims of all kinds of atrocities like

gender discrimination, social barriers, negative stereotype etc) should be taken into account by all sector of society but as long as this segment (women folk) of the population makes no effort of self-empowerment, it will be a long and arduous task and process for the outsiders to empower them.

Time has changed and present time is reflective of Mass media playing an instrumental role in changing the mind-set of the people in various ways. It has been a major force behind many social changes, debates, mass movements and creating activist groups. Nobody is unfamiliar with some of the most brutal and heinous crimes related to rapes like Kathua Rape Case (J&K) in 2018, Delhi Uber Cab Rape Case, Mumbai Shakti Mill Rape Case, Mumbai Hospital Rape Case of Aruna etc. These cases of women atrocities would not have been able to draw such immense attention of the masses without the active employment of social media tools by them and the people expressing their strong opinion on the different facets of the case. Times are such where important happenings and issues become a matter of concern and widespread debate within seconds of the outbreak of the event. Although there has been tremendous development and expansion of mass media, thus present study is an effort or an attempt to assess effects of mass media related to social justice and gender inequality issues related to women particularly educated Muslim women of Bhopal.

Brief history of the district Bhopal

Bhopal district was carved out of the erstwhile Sehore District of Bhopal division[1]. The district derives its name from the district head-quarters town Bhopal which is also the capital of Madhya Pradesh. The etymology of the term Bhopal has been derived from its former name Bhojpal as would be evident from the following extract from the imperial Gazetter of Central India, (1908 P.240). The district occupies 4Th place in the state according to population. The district occupies 50th rank in the state in terms of area having 2,772 sq. kms, which is 0.9 percent of the total area of state. Literacy Rate of Bhopal district is 80.4 percent and it occupies 3rd position in the state. The female literacy rate of the district is 74.9 percent Density wise the rank of the district is 1St in the state. Ranking of the district according to the sex-ratio is 33rd in the state. Female work participation of the district is 19.6 percent of total female population. Rank of the district according to female work participation is 47th (census, 2011) [3].

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[1] (Vide M.P. Govt. Notification No. 2477/1977/Sa/One/ dated 13th September, 1972).

Objective

The main objective of the study is to find out how youth make use of Mass media to bring before women issues and cases of atrocities against women and ensure social justice with equality.

Hypothesis

Mass media play a significant role in highlighting issues related to women atrocities at a large scale.

Educated Muslim women in Bhopal utilise social media to mobilise public attention in order to address burning issues like social justice and gender inequality.

Area of study

Located in the heart of Madhya Pradesh, the historical city of Bhopal is deservingly the capital of the state. Besides the excellent location of Bhopal, the city is called CITY OF LAKES, blessed with beautiful landscapes, busy profitable canters, peaceful residential areas and historical monuments. The geographical location of the Bhopal City lies within North Latitude 23°16' and East Longitude 77°36'. The location of Bhopal falls in the north-western portion of Madhya

Pradesh. If seen in the Map of India, Bhopal occupies the central most region of the country. The city of Bhopal shares its border with two large and picturesque lakes. Like few other big cities of the country, Bhopal is also divided into two parts - the old city and the new one. The Old Bhopal is situated in the northern part of the city, while the southern part is called as the New Bhopal. The main lakes of the Bhopal City are referred as the Upper and the Lower Lakes (Source: Report by UDD, Government of MP and BMC, 2012) [4].

Review of literature

Before interviewing the respondents, a thorough study was conducted in the area to collect the necessary information regarding the educated Muslim women in the district. There are many research designs to carry out the research or fieldwork on a particular type of research problem such as experimental research design, descriptive research design and exploratory research design. As far as my research is concerned, exploratory research design has been used in the present work. As per findings from the data available till date, it reveals that most of the respondents feel that mass media is a healthy platform to address social, cultural and other issues related to women folk. Objectives of the research work can be narrowed down further from more research work as it has also been suggested by exploratory research design. Some of the notable findings on the relevant subjects are briefly stated below;

Findings of Simon and Kadiyali: In the context of online media, suggested that online media have a substantial advantage over traditional offline media because websites are perceived to have the capacity of holding unlimited amounts of content.

Findings of a Study conducted by Hassan and Sharma A, reported that majority of urban women use mobile phones, laptops, tablets for taking information, news and for the entertainment. Almost half of the respondents read magazine sometimes and marginal respondents read it regularly.

Findings of study by Jung, Perez-Mira, and Wiley-Patton; examined influences of cognitive concentration and media content on consumers' acceptance of mobile television and concluded that media content played an important role in consumer's mobile television adoption.

Findings of Chyi and Sylvie; from the perspective of online news, suggested that online newspapers are capable of producing interactive, multimedia content such as online forums, searchable news archives, links to related stories, frequent updates, and webcasting, making them superior to offline news media in those increasingly important technical aspects.

A study done by Mittal (2002); reported that there is a significant impact of age on media consumption like internet surfing, mobile phone usage, viewership of television and duration. There is also significant impact of type of family and type of society on mass media patterns.

Prameela and Ravichandran (2001); in their study found that among women, lack of interest is seen most, domestic responsibility is having a good number, small number were expressed as barriers for not using the mass media. Lack of skill in operating mass media equipment is more than expected and lack of communication amenities and lack of regularity in getting information is less.

Results of a Study of Shukla (2000); reported that the major source of information for Muslim women is the television. Almost all respondents in his study said they are used to listening the radio either regularly or occasionally, urban masses use all types of channels of information but television and newspapers are the two most important sources of information.

Findings of a Study done by Gupta (1992); on "Mass Media and Social Change", revealed that the maximum number of respondents preferred the mobile / internet usage, less than half read newspapers and television viewers were all the respondents under discussion.

Research Methodology

As the approach followed in most social science research (Guroo, 2017) [2], present study is based on the both primary as well as secondary source of the data collection. On the, "Role of mass media in social justice and equality (A study of educated Muslim women in Bhopal)". For study, colleges of the Bhopal city were selected. Educated Muslim women of graduate/under graduate level from different Colleges of Bhopal City of Madhya Pradesh), were selected randomly for the study. Interview method used for data collection consisting of structured questions keeping in view the objectives of the study. Social background information was collected through an interview schedule which includes information about age, education, family type, social participation and source of information of the respondents. Other section of the tool dealt with the questions to obtain information regarding the availability of mass media, the utilization pattern and addressing of issues like social justice and gender related. Data collection is being done by conducting personal interview at the study centres of the subjects. Before interviewing the respondents, a thorough study was conducted in the area to collect the necessary information regarding the educated Muslim women in the district. After that with the help of simple random sampling, 100 respondents are selected for the collection of research data.

Universe & Selection of Sample:

The selected district is constituted of numerous educational institutions with almost bulk students, out of which we have selected only four colleges for present study. From each college only 25 respondents were selected for the collection of research data in relation to the demographic composition of the Bhopal city. In this way, 100 respondents were selected in total from the concerned universe. Before interviewing the respondents of the urban areas, a thorough study was conducted in the area to collect the necessary information regarding the urban dwellers and women in the district. After that with the help of random sampling, 15 respondents from each college are selected for the collection of research data. There are many research designs to carry out the research or fieldwork on a particular type of research problem such as experimental research design, descriptive research design and exploratory research design. As far as our research is concerned, exploratory research, design has been used in the present work. The data available to us revealed that our problem can be studied further for more research work as it has been suggested by exploratory research design (Guroo, 2016) [5].

Brief Profile of Respondents:

Selected College	Age Group			Qualification		Economic Group			Media User		
	<20 Y	20-30Y	>30 Y	UG	PG	EWS	LIG	MIG	D	P	O
Govt. Hamidia College	7	16	2	9	16	4	19	2	19	4	2
Excellence College	12	9	4	13	12	1	23	1	21	3	1
MLB College	5	6	14	10	15	7	16	2	17	8	0
Gitanjali College	3	14	8	17	8	6	14	5	23	1	1
Total	27	45	28	49	51	18	72	10	80	16	4

Note: (Y= Years; UG= Under Graduate; PG= Post Graduate; EWS= Economically Weaker Section; LIG= Lower Income Group; MIG= Middle Income Group; D= Digital: P= Print: O= Others & MLB= Maharani Laxmi Bai)

From each of the four colleges, we have taken 25 respondents making a total sample size of 100 respondents, out of which 49 respondents are pursuing graduation courses and 51 are post graduates. 18 respondents are from economically weaker section (***Annual income less than 1 lakh***), 72 respondents belong to lower income group (***Annual Income between 1 lakh to 3 Lakh***) while as 10 respondents belong to middle Income group (***Annual income between 3 lakhs to 6***

lakhs). According to Media wise distribution, 80 respondents' use Digital Media channels, 16 female respondents use Print Media and 4 utilise other media sources like broadcasting & outdoor media. It is clear from the profile analysis, majority of the respondents are of 20-30 age group and almost equal participation of under graduate and post graduate students have been selected. More than 2/3rd of the respondents belong to lower income class and maximum number of respondents adopts digital media patterns which consist of mostly internet to raise their voices and participation on numerous issues which usually we come across on daily basis. Structured questionnaire consists of 30 questions and some of the important questions are given below along with analysis to draw a possible outcome of the study.

Results and Discussions

Table 2

S.No.	How is your family's approach towards your education and career?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Negative	02	2.00
2	Positive	76	76.00
3	Neutral	19	19.00
4	Can't say	03	3.00
	Total	100	100.00

Out of the total of 100 respondents, 76% respondents confirmed that they have full and positive support of the family for education and making carrier of their own which depicts a positive sign and a very nominal 2% of the sample said they receive negative approach from their families. The results clearly demonstrated that in the present times parents and guardians are very much serious about education and career of their children and never shy away in fulfilling their dreams and ambitions.

Table 3

S.No.	Have you ever faced any harassment issue?	Frequency	Percentage
1	No	31	31.00
2	Yes	49	49.00
3	Negligible	18	18.00
4	Can't say	2	2.00
	Total	100	100.00

The above tabulated data made it very clear that almost half of the respondents have encountered with harassment issues i.e. 49% of the respondents have faced such incidents. 31% of the samples responded that they have never faced any harassment issue till now while as 18% feels that they have tolerated harassment issues which seem of negligible strength and a meager percentage of respondents did not replied due to some personal reasons. The findings are clear hints that 2/3rd of the respondents have ever faced harassment issues whether at study centers, market places, society or inside homes. It is a burning issue which female folk of our society have to take along with till we as a whole should realize and respect their dignity and give them equal and respectable status in each and every aspect of life.

Table 4

S.No.	Which of the following is the most effective mass media in your opinion?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Electronic Media	80	80.00
2	Print Media	16	16.00
3	Broadcast Media	3	3.00
4	Outdoor Media	1	1.00
	Total	100	100.00

A major finding of the research study was regarding the patterns of mass media adopted by educated Muslim women which have been assessed through the samples. Majority of the respondents, i.e. 80% of them are of the strong opinion that they use electronic media especially internet through Mobile phones, Laptops, Tablets etc. for getting information, communication

and to raise voices about various social & gender inequality issues. 16% of the respondents feel that they use print media like newspapers, books, magazines, journals etc. for the above said purpose while as remaining 4% of respondents use other media sources like broadcast media (television, radio etc.) and outdoor media (hoardings, banners, stalls etc.) for said purpose. Majority of respondents feel that social media nowadays is showcasing various prominent issues and happenings in our societies, especially women issues contribute to great extent in sharing and building up strong opinion amongst the masses.

Table 5

S.No.	What is your main purpose behind using mass media?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Educational purpose	28	28.00
2	Entertainment	15	15.00
3	Communication	9	9.00
4	Sharing ideas on various issues	47	47.00
5	Others	1	1.00
	Total	100	100.00

Above tabulated data throws light on the main purpose behind using mass media. The outcomes revealed a major fact that almost half of the samples of entire population use media for sharing ideas on numerous issues like social justice, gender discrimination, rape and sexual harassment, forced marriage, dowry etc. which are increasing at an alarming rate. Almost $1/4^{th}$ of the respondents use mass media as a tool for educational purposes like study material, online classes, range of study material etc. 15% of the respondents take it as entertainment while as 9% feels that media is a communication based platform. No doubt we see that all those cases concerning women whether it's regarding women rights or various types of atrocities against women, primarily rape cases which go unnoticed in the mainstream media. Educated women strongly felt that Mass media in a way has emerged as a platform which has given voice to the voiceless and the very neglected and tortured women sections of the society, where they don't shy away in bringing forth their painful stories amongst the masses and such stories greatly influence and impacts the mindset of the society especially the young educated women propelling them to come forward and stage their view point on it and build up a strong opinion group.

Table 6

S.No.	Media plays an active role in protecting women rights and value	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	4	4.00
2	Disagree	1	1.00
3	Neither	12	12.00
4	Agree	39	39.00
5	Strongly agree	44	44.00
	Total	100	100.00

This data shows that how respondents feel about media whom we consider as a platform in protecting women's rights and values. 39% and 44% of the respondent agree and strongly agree respectively that media undoubtedly plays an important role in protecting their rights and values. The above tabulated data shows that a meager 5% of the respondents disagree with the discussed opinion.

Table 7

S.No.	What issues do you think that women can address most effectively with increasing participation in media?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Career related	10	10.00
2	Gender inequality	42	42.00
3	Harassment & exploitation	39	39.00
4	Social & cultural	8	8.00
5	Others	1	1.00
	Total	100	100.00

One of the foremost objectives of the study was to know the issues which can be addressed effectively with increasing participation in mass media. Most of the respondents, i.e. 42% and 39% of the sample are of the opinion that issues related to gender inequality, harassment & exploitation can be effectively addressed by sharing ideas and views on said issues through mass media. 10% of the respondents agree that career related issues can be solved with the help of

media. Remaining 9% of the respondents feel that social and cultural issues can be well addressed through mass media. The results made it clear that presently Mass media has become one of the strongest platforms where captioned issues have been successfully addressed to the greatest extent in agitating the daughters of the nation and convincing them to come on the streets to demonstrate their unity in fighting for gender justice and equality.

Conclusion

The present research will make it clear that mass media has begun as a very strong platform. Preference is given to electronic media especially mobile phone usage and internet over the other modes of media patterns, which they deem fit for updating themselves. It is considered as the most widely used tool which makes an individual more expressive and modern. Through media exposure, a woman truly believes that she is not behind males in any aspect of life. She feels modernized due to availability of outreach sources and wants to participate in every sector of society and ready to shoulder higher responsibilities. In cases of women atrocities and violence which earlier remain unnoticed, now women get a chance to express their strong opinion on various issues, thus giving escalation to various forms of protests and demonstrations both on mass media platform as well as on the streets which finally results in compelling the government to change their policies in the direction of restoration of women equality and social justice. The initial study of the present research revealed that it is being highly felt that mass media is one of the strongest platforms which highlights women issues where special attention is to be needed, especially those areas where women have been the victims of all kinds of atrocities like rape, sexual molestation, gender discrimination, stereotype and social injustice. Analysis of available data and information will surely help in redressal of certain issues related to educated Muslim women. The outcome of the research will provide a deep insight into the patterns of mass media and will provide a base in formulating certain policies and strategies to curb growth of harassment, inequality issues and to bring a radical change in society and mindset of the people in general. Hence our assumption that mass media play a significant role in highlighting issues related to women atrocities at a large scale is justified and it has come to surface that educated Muslim women in Bhopal utilise social media to mobilise public attention in order to address burning issues like social justice and gender inequality.

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