

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PROJECTION OF POSITIVE IMAGE OF WOMAN THROUGH MEDIA

Maria Rashid Malik
Information Group Officer,
Ministry of Information,
PAKISTAN.
gcu_maria@yahoo.com

Almas Kiani
Assistant Professor
University of Arid Agriculture Rawalpindi,
PAKISTAN.
almaskiani@uaar.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Media is a promising industry in Pakistan and is an effective tool to formulate not only public opinion but also can polish already existing social values. Women projection in Pakistani media is not entirely positive, though electronic media boom holds the potential of making women projection ideal. The factor of commercialism is the most influential in this type of projection. It was a survey study and a questionnaire was developed to collect data from three active media outlets. The objectives of the study involved to find out how women are projected in Pakistani Media and to identify the extent to which it is capable of positive projection. SWOT analysis has been made to evaluate the current women projection strategies through media. The significance of the study can be gauged from the fact that it can be used as an initial effort to base full scale government project to enhance media indulgence in positive projection of women in Pakistan. The recommendations rendered in the paper, after adding practical aides, can be materialized to achieve the aim of balanced, positive, realistic and promising projection of women in Pakistan.

Keywords: Exploratory, Projection, Image, Women, Media.

INTRODUCTION

Media includes every type of dissemination source including TV, radio, e-mail, direct mail, telephone, internet and fax. In common phraseology there are three types of media: Print Media, Electronic Media and Digital Media. Print media is considered to be the first and primary form of mass communication. Newspapers, weeklies, magazines and all types of printed journals define print Media. In dissemination of information, transmission of news and propagation of education, print media carries indisputable place and space. Positive Women projection through media which was the major analysis point of this research paper can be best achieved through print media. In-depth analysis and reporting that is peculiar to print media makes it most effective than other types for propagation of any certain issue. Electronic media coverage is unrivalled in regard to its rapid effect on the audience. TV, radio etc connect wide distances between events and audience within friction of seconds. So any issue necessitating immediacy in projection can be best conveyed through electronic media. Zia (2007)

Positive Women projection through electronic media can achieve wonders because constant projection of a desired image of women and women issues will have psychological impact on

the audience. Audience will, without any conscious effort, get familiar, accept and then may follow the propagated stance regarding women issues.

Social Media is the web-based and or mobile oriented technologies that make communication an interactive dialogue and a two way process. Social Media is the platform for creation and exchange “user generated content”. Social Media as a means to social communication has transformed the communication mode of organization, communities as well as individuals.

For instance, Uks is a research, resource and publication centre dedicated to the cause of gender equality and women's development. The Center focuses on the women-media relationship; a concern that has hitherto remained poorly represented by organizations working on women's rights. It issued a report titled ‘More women in news & views’ which was made on the basis of monitoring of selected mainstream media in Pakistan. The report evaluated media products regarding gender roles and representation by the media, particularly women stereotypes presentation. The findings of the report state that women in news are under- represented and news about women besides being small in proportion is ‘Biased and Unfair As Well.’ The report also point out that such a state of women presentation in Media , may not a “journalistic Stance” rather can be the result of incapacity or indifference of people involved to revise such ideas and issues. Uks (2011)

On Pak Tribune Discussion forum the key point of this research paper was discussed in 2007. The discussion noted that there is an increasing trend in stake holders i.e. media professionals, policy planners, N.G.O and women activists to analyze women issues vis-a- vis media. It also reported that media is considered to be an effective tool to achieve women empowerment. Despite legal covers, print and electronic media is continuously presenting women in a stereotype image. The focus is on the physical beauty of women to sell their products. Women issues have inadequate coverage and gender sensitivity to news is not reflected in the media presentations. On the organizational level, men are holding the decision making positions and women representation is insufficient. Pak Tribune (2007)

Zia (2007) wrote on ‘Media and Gender: Pakistani Perspective’ and it dealt with some core questions of media projection. He pointed that women in media organizations are under-represented and only 5% of journalist fraternity is women. Women are not only scarcely represented in decision making position rather in professional line they are mostly assigned “soft beats” like fashion, culture, art, women institutions etc. in Pakistani media women are projected in a stereotypical image. The characteristics of light heartedness, spontaneity, general attractiveness and figure is what that defines the women projected in media. Moreover, media projection in Pakistan is ‘Gender Insensitive’ so consequently there is less coverage of women issues.

Women Media Centre (WMC) issued seminars report in 2007-8 titled ‘Glass Ceiling: Empowerment of Women through Media. The report records the oft detected judgment that women are underrepresented in media organizations. Particularly state owned i.e. APP, PBC never had female Director General. Women journalists have far less opportunities for professional training as compared to their male counter parts, WMC claims to have worked in this regard. The report states the fact that one cause of under representation of women is reluctance to oft for field work by women themselves. In another report of seminar of WMC, “Changing Attitude: Expanding Women Role in Media and Politics”, it was states that there are opportunities in the field of journalism and politics for women. Such opportunities should be utilized in a balanced and positive way. There is trust and confidence gap between

men and women which should be eliminated on professional lines. Even where women are represented there is obvious gap between their representation and actual participation in the crucial working of any institution. WMC (2007).

Pakistani media which has been limited up till a decade ago, to print media and one state owned TV and radio channel, proved to be deficient in effectively portraying women and projecting their issues. Print Media records women in typical stories which are believed to be source of attraction for the readers. When covered in news, women's vulnerability to fall victim to cruelties of patriarchal, feudal discriminating society is highlighted rather than emphasizing or focusing on the law breaker or exploiter in the situation. Such reportage incites sympathetic attitudes in the readers towards women while psychologically rating them as inferior species. When portrayed in entertainment section women are projected as fragile biologically, beauty objectified physiologically and less meditative psychologically. They are projected as par seen and desired by male audience only. Women icons in the field of politics, professions, showbiz, sports are reported and their activities scrutinized on the scale of their gender. Their conduct, attire achievements, views are often linked to their feminist roots rather than taking them as politicians, professionals, artists or sportspersons. It holds a visible change in the way it projected women before electronic media boom and after it.

Before electronic media boom, the trend of women projection in entertainment programs of the state owned TV and Radio channel had been limited to the domestic image of women. Women were portrayed in stereotypical homely roles of mother, sister, wife, and daughter. Hardly women were treated as human being irrespective of their gender. Women icons were not connected to the actual women of the land. The situation has been on the side of improvement since arrival of hosts of media channels. Though traditional trends are continuously followed but media does try to portray diversified image and role of women in the modern society.

In Pakistan, PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) ordinance stated code of conduct of media broadcasters and cable TV operators and ensured that all programs and advertisements do not contain or encourage obscenity, vulgarity or other material offensive to commonly accepted standards of morality. This ordinance assertively cleared that any material targeting sanctity of home, family and marriage are also prohibited. Similarly any advertisements containing material which is repugnant to ideology of Pakistan or Islamic values are also prohibited. Therefore, it is imperative under this Code of Conduct for advertisers or program producers to design their programs in such a manner that they conform to the Constitution of Pakistan and laws of the country as well. And their products should not be offensive to morality, decency and religious sects of the country. On the basis of the laws promulgated in Pakistan there are few authorities responsible for monitoring media projection in the country. Besides state owned institutions, there are some self regulatory organizations made by the journalists as well. As per the stated function of the organization the authority is 'responsible for facilitation and regulating the establishment and operation of all broadcast media and distribution services in Pakistan'. PEMRA issues the license conditioned with certain code of ethics so consequently any media outlet is liable to disqualify its license in case it violates the code of morality in its transmission. Malik (2009)

It is a regulatory body and censorship board of Pakistan. The Central Board Film Censor is another regulatory body governed by the Motion Picture Ordinance, 1979 and rules made

there under. The prime statutory function of the CBFC is censorship of films. To make the film industry abide by the code for censorship, strict policy measures are adopted from time to time and, while certifying films, every effort is made to ensure that no scene, dance or dialogue gets through which is derogatory to the accepted moral standards of the women projection in society. Pakistan Advertiser's Society has a mandate to implement Code of Advertising Practice amongst its members. This society assured the right of advertising is a responsibility towards the consumers and it seeks public trust in advertising and to ensure transparency at all levels of operations.

There is lack of gender sensitivity in media in Pakistan thus media has failed to eliminate gender based stereotyping in its projection. Not only in Pakistan but also throughout Asia women are projected in media as victims, subservient, sacrificing and objectified sexualized being. Such inaccurate portrayal of women life makes media indifferent to diverse contribution made by women in socio-political and cultural uplift of society. Both newspapers and magazines are predominantly stereotyped and de-humanized image of women and are usually are presented in the roles of irrational, gullible and scheming creatures. UNESCO(2002) stated gender sensitive balanced guidelines and cleared that be careful about gender-neutrality. It sometimes results in inaccurate over-generalization about the different roles that women and men play in society e.g. farmers, traders, entrepreneurs.

According to UNDP (1998) women's role in TV drama have become secondary, passive and glamorous. However, it is important to discuss here that Pakistan's electronic media has undergone a revolutionary evolution which has completely changed the dynamics and characteristics which used to define traditional trends of Pakistani electronic Media. The private sector in electronic media is successfully competing with the foreign channels. Women participation in TV and FM radio channels is quite promising, we see women in on TV as News Anchor conducting Current Affair Programs, in news casting, working behind and in front of camera, in news studio as well doing field reporting. Number of educated young woman journalists working for electronic media is increasing day by day. There is room for improvement in the way Electronic media presents genders issues. Women make more than 50% of Pakistan's population as their issues are represented as par warranted by their number. The drama presents women mostly in typical roles in which women life is depicted as being confined dealing with highly politicized domestic policies. The essential feminine appeal of women is highlighted even when their character is presented in a modern professional role. For example, Women are casted just to glamorize the ad even when their presence is not required for example ads about gents' products, electronics etc and female models are used to enhance the sex appeal and attract the audience even when it's irrelevant to the item being advertised. The survey of Pakistan Advertising Association has come up with the findings that 83% of women are used in the advertisements where they are not even needed, 88% of women are used just to promote the products, 75% of all advertisements portray women for products used in kitchen and bathroom while 56% of advertisements portray women as domestic helpers or housewives and Men are presented in 43 professions whereas women are presented in 18 of them. http://www.brandsynario.com/industry-associations/181_pakistan-advertising-association-paa.aspx

A plethora of global research revealed that women portrayal is not ideal even in that developed country. Dickey. J. (2006) in Out of Focus says that women are portrayed as sex objects. They are made perfect seen by men's eyes. Their function is to sell the product so their looks are more important than their humanness. Similarly, Dodd et al (1989) explored in

his study that photos of women are focused on their bodies whereas photos of men focus more on their face. (cited in: Portrayal of women in Pakistani media” a study compiled by the Women’s Division of Pakistan.). Hall et al (1994) detected that women are mostly shown in leisure wear in advertisements and men are mostly shown in work wear. In daytime soap operas telecasted on Star World ad America Plus characters are presented in a stereotypical way.

Thus the meta- analysis findings of above studies (both local and international) studies are found consistent with the findings of this study.

OBJECTIVES

This study was aimed to:

find out how women are projected in Pakistani media and to identify the extent to which it is capable of positive projection.

to endeavors to articulate how the positive projection of women through media, can be increased, polished and made effective.

METHODOLOGY

Population

The population was comprised of all the well-reputed media professionals and media outlets of both electronic and print media.

Sample

Thirty media professionals were sampled in the following relevant capacities: News Anchor, News casters, News Directors, TV program Producers, Graphic designer TV programs, News paper reports, News paper editor. These thirty respondents were selected from three media outlets i.e. ROYAL News and Express News; and third one was newspaper Daily Ajkal.

DATA COLLECTION

An inventory was developed to explore the views of media professionals about the projection of positive image of women through media.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed through simple percentage method and tabulated as well. SWOT analysis was made for in depth analysis, in order to see the consistency of the findings of this study with the findings of Meta analysis.

FINDINGS**Part A**

Table 1 presented findings regarding the projection of positive image of women through media in Pakistan.

Table 1 An Inventory of Projection of Positive Image of Women Through Media in Pakistan

S.No.	Items	Yes	No
1.	Role of media in our lives	90%	10%
2.	Formation of effective perceptions about media	60%	40%
3.	Fair presentation of women	50%	50%
4.	Positive projection of women through media	36%	64%
5.	Print media is the most effective medium in balancing women projection through media	80%	20%
6.	Print media is the major contributory medium in portraying a negative image of women	70%	30%
7.	Commercialism is most crucial factor in mal projection of women through media	70%	30%
8.	Legislative and Executive bodies can play more effective role in monitoring media policies	70%	30%
9.	Domestic image is supposed to be a best suited image of Pakistani women in media	70%	30%
10.	Negative projection of women in international media	80%	20%
11.	Role of media in women empowerment	70%	30%
12.	Responsibility and creditability of media for promoting positive image of women	80%	20%

Majority (90%) of the media professionals viewed that media plays an important role in our life. This indicated that media men are aware of the possible impact of their profession. Considerable majority 60% was convinced that the media impact is effective and permanent. This showed that there is a confidence in media men that whatever they do matters in the working of society. Interestingly media professionals seem to be indecisive about whether women are under represented in media or not. They responded equally to both the options i.e 50:50. Almost 64 % of the media men were cognizent of the fact that women are not projected positively in Pakistani Media. Though majority of the media men surveyed were from electronic Media yet they gave their Unbiased opinion in majority. 80% media professionals revealed that print media is more effective in balancing women projection through media. While rest of them perceived that the electronic media being positive and also favoured social Media in this regard. Surprisingly print media also topped the list in perception of being the most responsible medium in negatively contributing towards women projection(70%). Then (30%) held responsible print and social media. A significant number

of media professionals (70%) revealed that 'Commercialism' is the most responsible factor for negative projection of women in media and 30% considered liberal mindset as an effective factor and also related to international trends lead towards negative projection of women. Remarkable number of respondents (70%) reported that Legislative and Executive bodies can play an effective role in monitoring the media policies and other rated media as being most suitable to monitor itself. (70%) cases reported that the domestic image of women as a tool to positively project women on media while some believed that working lady image as most effective to inspire positive image of women and also favoured showbiz image to projected in leading capacity. An overwhelming majority of media professionals (80%) observed that even in international media women projection is negative and very few thought that the projection is neutral and also termed media portrayal in international media as positive. Large number of respondents 70% supported this view that the positive projection of women in media will lead towards betterment of women plight in real society but some respondents couldn't detect any link between positive projection and strengthening of women position in society. Majority of media professionals (80%) confessed that working for positive image of women in media will reciprocate in making the media more responsible and enhancing its credibility in the eyes of public.

Part B

SWOT Analysis

After an analytical insight into the various queries of the survey, an in-depth analysis of the entire situation will help to conclude and then to recommend some strategies best suitable for the situation in Pakistan.

a. Strengths

Media men are mindful of the fact that women are not being projected positively right now. This indicates that they are working with realistic mindset in the field and reposed their trust in legislative and executive bodies to monitor their working. This argued well for pro-democratic trend in our society. Despite being influenced by the commercial compulsions of their profession media men preferred the domestic image over the excessively glamorized image of showbiz women.

b. Weaknesses

Media professionals admitted that the commercialism was the most potent source of negative projection of women in media. This testified the notion that media is not run on ethical considerations or as a public service rather as a business enterprise. Media men were yet to overwhelmingly accept women's participation in vocational activities. Majority of them considered that domestic image was best suited to project women positively rather than an image of working lady.

c. Opportunities

Media professionals accepted that the positive projection of women would not only benefit women cause but also would enhanced media credibility. This tacit willingness to work for the cause of positive women projection can be channelized by adopting well articulated strategies. They viewed that the print media was more responsible for negative projection of women. This provided the booming industry of electronic media an opportunity to undo this perception by portraying women positively in its wide range coverage.

d. Threats

There is an international trend of projecting women negatively, it's difficult to practically detach from international trend when every type media is vying for international markets. Commercialism is another powerful hurdle in ideally strategizing about positive portrayal of women. Even when media is determined to positively project women their business considerations don't let them follow their high sounding objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

- a. Mass media has a vibrant role in modern society to act as a stimulus of change. Its impact on the masses can't be negated, this study has validated this notion that media plays an important role and casts an everlasting impression in every field.
- b. Media is an effective medium to propagate any ideology so in perspective of gender representation media can play a vital role. Women representation in media and their projection through media is an indication of the socio-cultural trends any society is following.
- c. In Pakistan after the electronic media boom women participation in media field is on the increase. It was concluded that the media professionals didn't accept the notion that women are underrepresented in the field. Due to this feedback, it can be commented that the media is increasingly becoming a promising professional choice for women in Pakistan.
- d. Women projection in Pakistani media is not entirely positive. Women are still predominantly projected as beauty objectified or in stereotypical roles. But there are obvious signs of improvement with increasing number of female current affairs' news anchors; women are making their due place in intellectual discourse.
- e. Media is influenced by the media filters among which commercialism plays most important role.
- f. Media men themselves agree at least theoretically, that there should be effective monitoring check on their coverage.
- g. International media trend of women projection can't be considered as ideal. Women are portrayed as beauty tool to attract viewers.
- h. Positive media projection on media is mutually beneficial to both women cause and media industry as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The women and media present equation necessitates that there should Be Steady And Devoted Effort to keep up the trend towards positive projection of women in media and their increased participation in the field.

All the media outlets in Pakistan should be directed by the government that they should train their media men for Gender Sensitive Coverage. PEMRA and other voluntary association in media can play an important role in educating the media professionals.

It is recommended that there should be Permanent Liaison between the media professionals, critics, women representatives and viewers so that to formulate gender sensitive guidelines for media outlets to follow.

Women should be given due Representation in decision making positions in media outlets. This step will make sure that decisions thus taken and policies thus formulated are not tinged by gender bias against women.

Media should portray situations which advocate greater harmony between the two genders instead of unnecessarily posing them in opposite camps.

Language in vogue in media particularly print media, is relatively gender influenced, there is need to rephrase it. Women literary figures can play an important in reformulating the language which is gender- neutral.

Media can play an important role in projecting positive image of working women by highlighting the beneficial aspects in its programs particularly through art field like dramas etc.

Media can also play an important role in de-activating atrocities of social evils against women. Social hostilities inherent in customs like vani, sawara, karo kari can be exposed by media awareness campaigns on all types of media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The principal author extend her sincere gratitude to honorable research advisor Ms. Tanvir Kiyani, Director Special Assignments, Information Service Academy and Almas Kiani, Assistant Professor, University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi. Their precious guidance and worthy kindness paved the way for me to undertake this research, and rectify procedural and tactical mistakes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hall et al (1994). Women and “Body-isms” in Television Beer commercials. *Journal of Sex Roles*: 31: 3: 329-337. Arizona State University West, USA. Springer Netherlands
- Dickey, J. (2006). *Out of Focus*, Journal of the CPBF. The Free Press. London: UK
- Malik,F.(2009).).“Portrayal of Women in Advertisement under Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMPRA) SGGI Working Group on ‘Women & Media’ holds its 4th Roundtable. Retrieved from <http://www.ips.org.pk/whats-new/sggi/1137-portrayal-of-women-in-advertisements-and-the-pemra-ordinance.html>
- PakTribune (2007).Discussion Forums: Reseach Studies on Women and Media, Retrieved from <http://paktribune.com/pforums/posts.php?t=5936&start=1>
- Uks (2011). *Challenging Trends*, Islamabad. (A research, resource, and Publication Centre on women and media).
- UNESCO (2002). “Portrayal of Women in Media Project” research by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/webworld/news/2002/020822_pakistan.shtml or visit UNDP at <http://www.un.org.pk/undp/gen/gender.htm>.
- UNDP (1998). “Representing the Unrepresented: Portrayal of Women in Pakistan Television Programs”. United Nation Development Program, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Steven, H. (2000). Article titled “Sex Sells”, published in “Sex Appeal: The Art of Allure in Graphic and Advertising Design / Graphic Design & Reading: Exploration of an Uneasy Relationship”. UK. Allworth Press.
- WMC. (2007). *Changing Attitude:Expanding Women Role in Media and Politics*. USA: National Endowment for Democracy(NED).
- Zia, A. (2007). *Media and Gender:Pakistani Perspectives*. Singapore: AMIC.