

GENDER CRUX

(An Anthology of Articles on Gender Issues and Perspectives)

Editor

Samikshya Madhukullya

Associate Editor

Anurag Hazarika



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Gender Crux is an anthology of various articles based on gender issues which explores both mainstream and marginalised gender issues for analysis of images of male, female and other gender, the idea of womanhood, patriarchy, masculinity and concepts like gender inclusiveness and exclusiveness, domination and submissive attitude.

The concept of Gender acts as a huge umbrella which touches upon all the sectors of life including life style, society, economy, films and media, health and so on and so forth. Through this collection of articles we get a glimpse of the gendered ideologies shaping society in this 21st Century.

This book makes a significant contribution to gender, women and culture and media studies as it opens up multiple dimensions of inquiry. The book is edited by Samikshya Madhukullya(Editor) and Anurag Hazarika(Associate Editor) and is published by Ashok Book Stall, Panbazar, Guwahati-1.

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Contact No. : 75770-73317; Email : globalnetpublication@gmail.com

HEAD OFFICE

w Guwahati Ashok Publication
Jaswanta Road, Panbazar
Guwahati-1
Contact No : 94350-44525, 70028-46982
E-mail : absguw@gmail.com

w Guwahati Ashok Book Stall
Jaswanta Road, Panbazar
Guwahati-1
Contact No : 94350-44525, 70028-46982
E-mail : absguw@gmail.com

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Dedication

To
My Mother



A strong and Gentle soul who taught me to trust God and to believe in Myself. A person who made me realise that " So Much Could Be Done With Little". She has been an inspiration to me and will always be.

—————May Your Soul REST IN PEACE—————

My Father



For being my First Teacher. A person who has done an honest earning for our living and for supporting, encouraging and giving me the best of what I require for the Development of Myself in all positive arenas of Knowledge. He has been my role model and will always be.

—————May Your Soul REST IN PEACE—————

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Words from the Editor



Gender Crux is a conglomeration of fine profile of numerous articles and research based papers .It is distinct not only because of the care with which the selections have been made but also because it mirrors the range of concerns variety of styles and the vitality from the fields of Social Sciences, Humanities, Gender Studies, Women Studies Media and Cultural Studies.

The aim of Gender Crux is to put light into the unknown and unheard ideas, norms, perspectives of the past and the present day. This book also seeks to examine the possibilities for reading, analysis and other critical engagements with the very idea of exploration made possible. The writers in this book unfold the unseen angles and perspectives on various socio- cultural norms that exists in the society. It throws light into how ancient norms or beliefs and laws is still very much in operation .

-Samikshya Madhukullya

Foreword

- Being a woman is one thing. Being a woman and a leader is another. In today's 21st century and with the ushering in of a new "*decade of action*", it is all the more important for women to understand their role in guiding the world towards ambitious all-inclusive action.

In parts of Africa and Asia, women are often associated with the kitchen and domestic duties. This can be a very closeted and narrow-minded view of the role that women play in developing a character and nurturing growth. While a woman's role in the kitchen brings with it joys of communing with others and artistic creations with food, it can sometimes be used to limit progress for women who are constantly reminded not to step out of their place even if they may be able to contribute intelligibly to other matters outside of the kitchen.

This is what this book explores. How women have through time defied obstacles, traditional and cultural barriers and sometimes even the powers that be to bring change in their communities. Something needs to be said though about gender and feminism. Contrary to public opinion, feminists and gender activists do not intend to impose superiority over other genders, but instead to amplify the positive impact born when each gender identity recognizes the contribution that others (often marginalized in the past) can bring to everyday life and to global challenges.

As a woman myself, I acknowledge the journey it has taken me to discover my true self worth and purpose in life, and this gift of womanhood that I am always grateful for every waking day. I hope that this book inspires you to love this gift and share the knowledge weaved into the pages that follow with others.

Wholeheartedly and Lovingly
Maria E. (Auma) Horne
Founder/CEO
BLI Global

- Dear Mr. Anurag and Mrs. Samikshya,

Congratulations on the upcoming release of your second book “Gender Crux”. The few introductions that you have let me know were so good it’s a wonder they weren’t snatched up sooner.

You have selected an interesting theme. And I look forward to reading your book very soon.

Best wishes to you and your wife. It is easy to conceptualize a theme but to put it into writing is itself a success. I say more power to you!

Warm Regards
Mr. Sohel Arnool
General Secretary, Assam Association Singapore

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to all the esteemed writers who have given their generous permission and consent to include their penned works in this book. Without their cooperation the publication of this book would not have materialised.

I have had the benefits of discussions, sometimes brief and sometimes in details on the various perspectives related to this book on the subject of Gender, Women , Media and Culture with esteemed academicians and writers of this era. I am indebted to all of them for sharing their thoughts and ideas with me.

A special word of thanks is due to Anurag Hazarika who has helped in co-editing this piece of work.

Finally, my thanks are due to my parents Late. Amales Das and Late. Meera Das Mahanta (Renowned Social Activist) for their patient persuasion and irrepressible confidence in me which made me undertake this work and complete it. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to my Father-in-Law Dr. Pranjit Hazarika and Mother-in-Law Mrs. Anju Saikia Hazarika for encouraging me in the journey of creating this book.

Tezpur
September 2020


Editor

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GENDER NORMS : HOW IT INFLUENCES GENDER INEQUALITY

Md Sahariar Hasan Jiisun

*(National Consultant - eCommerce Implementation, a2i, ICT Division) Shabiba Benta
Habib (eCommerce Professional, ekShop - a2i Programme)
Obain (Assistant Superintendent of Police, Bangladesh Police)*

Rezwanul Haque Jami

(Team Lead - Rural eCommerce & Head of Commercialization, a2i, ICT Division)

Context

The development of a country's population rests on the properly catalyzing and support of innovation for all its citizens – both women and men. Most of the development initiatives couldn't gain the highest level of success to specify their target beneficiaries, which is due to their lack of understanding about gender norms and how it affects gender relations and inequality.

Despite some progressive research and development related investments on women, these initiatives couldn't break gender norms completely. The development initiatives fail to consider the gender norms that reign over the women. These norms are particularly hindering women's education, healthcare access, and economic empowerment. Most of Bangladeshi perceive gender norms to be absolute and assume it to be a crucial part of their culture and norms. It has affected the population's ability to innovate, adapt, and benefit from new technologies. Women and men differ in their contribution to anything related to benefitting from agricultural innovation to technology; it is gender-differentiated.

In this article, it is explored how gender norms shape these differences and which gender norms are most significant. Gender norms, by definition, exist at the societal level. There are variations in their extent and use and from one community to the next. Gender norms are contingent upon social identity and financial status. These norms are shaped by patriarchal based social relations and are engraved in the everyday lives and govern over the existing structural and institutional

conditions. Women and men often unconsciously either assert, resist or renegotiate their gender norms and behave in ways that reject or reshape prevailing cultural norms about gender.

There is strong evidence that gender norms are a key factor inhibiting women's capacity to develop. However, it also influences the capacity of women and men, both, to adapt and innovate themselves according to their society. Despite that, the global movement of women's empowerment is considered as a marketing tool and targets of activities.

Although Bangladesh's economy has been growing over the past two decades, it still remains a country of deep and extensive poverty. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Bangladesh was 0.579 in 2016 but falls to 0.412 when adjusted for inequality, representing a 'loss due to inequality' of 39% (UNDP, 2016).

Effect of Gender Norms

Movements and initiatives towards reducing gender inequality has not yielded satisfactory results and this is due to several norms that govern the public and private spaces of citizens. Traditionally, women are discouraged from participating in the management or backend side, mostly due to their societal effectiveness on the front-end (i.e. front desk jobs). Age-old perceptions still persist where a woman is deemed fit for the role of home-makers. These are the two major social forces which create obstacles and encourage gender differentiation. Patriarchal traditions and values preside over the cityscape as well, while it is still very much normalized in the most rural geography of Bangladesh.

So far, there have been no strict and effective policies/initiatives to ensure women's security in light of the recent violence carried out against them at home, educational and job institutions, roads and the like. Due to this, the women are discouraged and are not able to attain higher education or apply for jobs, citing the locations to be unsafe. Therefore, there is a significantly lower number of girls in all institutions. Additionally, having sons as opposed to daughters is still preferred by families, deeming their futures more bright and prosperous. This preference governs the traditional Bangladeshi society and creates an internal gender discrimination from birth. In the case of employment, employers in Bangladesh still tend to employ men first rather than women.

Gender Mainstreaming: A Way to Break Gender Norms and Improve Lives

The ECOSOC defines gender mainstreaming as "a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels". The strategy takes into account both women's and men's concerns and incorporates their experiences. Both these factors

are an integral aspect of the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs in all political, economic, and social spheres. It is so that women and men can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

Proper integration of gender mainstreaming leads to changes in policies, projects, organizations, structures, and procedures in order to be conducive for achieving gender equality. Representation of gender numbers in public facets of the country (i.e. the government or job sectors) are heavily underrepresented. There are gender inequalities in numerous areas, for example in during election and the candidates of political bodies. Opinions and standings of women during other decision-making levels are sub-par, often not taken into account.

Gender mainstreaming in politics, administration, and development in South Asia has become a need in order to achieve the needed development to alleviate itself. Therefore, it is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed. To achieve gender equality, process and policy changes are required at various levels. Changes in attitudes and relationships are easier said than done, but however it is the most critical of them all. It is necessary in all social organizations, from family to the state.

Bangladesh government initiatives implementing “Gender Mainstreaming”

1. 333 call centre started by the Bangladesh government strives to provide information on procedures to anyone seeking it - ranging from receiving public services to making complaints - and also getting information through to its citizens. To receive the services, seekers have to dial the helpline number 333. They can call from anywhere and can know about government offices / officers and tourist attractions from 64 districts. The citizens can also report issues about different social problems; they can call in and relay their complaints and issues and get assistance from the Deputy Commissioner of the area and Upazila Nirbahi Officers themselves. Furthermore, using this helpline, they can seek assistance from them during disasters. The call centre service was piloted in all 64 districts of Bangladesh by the Access to Information (a2i) Programme and over 6 lakh citizens have received information services till March 2018. Among these, over 4,000 social and domestic problems have been solved and addressed by Deputy Commissioners and Upazila Nirbahi Officers. This included 541 cases of food adulteration, 431 cases of child marriage, and 391 cases of illegal drugs distribution. To empower the service handlers and ensure the smooth running of the service, a2i has arranged for hands-on training on operation-related issues of 333. This way, it teaches the service handlers necessary skills and empowers them. This training is overseen by one Additional Deputy Commissioner, three Upazila Nirbahi Officers, and one Assistant Commissioner in every district.

2. An in-depth study conducted by the UN (2006) revealed that one in every three women in the world was a victim of gender-based violence. Similarly, a nationwide study conducted in Bangladesh in 2008 by the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSPVAW) reported that 58 percent of the respondents between the age of 10 and 49 were the victims of violence (MSPVAW website). The social construction of the society of Bangladesh makes it harder for children and women to report these violences, fearing the social stigma and the victim shaming/blaming attached to it. There persists a sense of insecurity and ignorance about the provisions provided (supports and services), legal and tangible, for the victims. Hence, they remain silent. Hence, to push through this hesitance and help the vast majority of abused women and children, a helpline has been established under the MSPVAW of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The short code, 109, was assigned to use as helpline number. The number is a toll-free number and can be dialled from both mobile numbers and telephones. The center is equipped with modern equipment and the latest operating systems. It is believed that the women and children victims, their families, and other stakeholders will benefit from relevant information for various advice, services and supports which are available throughout the country. The National Helpline Centre for Violence against Women and Children also guides the victims with legal provisions and advises them on the actions to take. The helpline provides the victims with various counselling services; both to them and their family members. In cases of dire emergencies, they initiate rescue missions for the victims by alerting law enforcement agencies and other social activists.
3. Technology-based modern centers from every union, district, municipality and different wards of city corporations are now called digital centers. Women Entrepreneurs in Digital Center ensured 50% participation of women in every union. This initiative is taken by the Access to Information (a2i) Program. Local women were provided necessary ICT training and knowledge on computer hardware and software use, and troubleshooting, to be placed into area-based digital centres. So far, there are women working in 5,273 digital centers have received training. These women in digital centres are a part of the Digital Literacy movement, wherein the women will gain expertise in digital center activities and will be able to provide local people with the necessary support. Every digital center aims to employ a woman entrepreneur along with every man employed in every union. It is very important in order to materialize the Digital Bangladesh vision. The rural women will get an opportunity to learn IT skills and gain knowledge. Other women will also be encouraged to avail the services if at least one-woman entrepreneur is there. This way, it promotes women and normalizes their status to be an integral part of our society. The women will take part in technological innovation, taking them from employability to entrepreneurship. They are able to integrate the

ICT skills taught in their daily and professional lives. Some 400 women entrepreneurs from 11 city corporations and 1,500 women entrepreneurs from 15 districts have already received training from Microsoft.

4. To develop an efficient ecosystem for the e-commerce industry, the government has taken an initiative to establish an integrated and assisted E-Commerce platform named ekShop. It acts as a national supply chain and integrates all the top E-Commerce, logistics players and payment partners and links them with the Union Digital Centers (UDCs). The labour force of the country is growing 3.1% per annum and there is a strong necessity to create employment opportunity. Hence, with the induction of micro merchants as E-Commerce agents, the new workforce will be put to great use, resulting in a reduction of the unemployment rate. There have been more than 2000 micro-merchants engaged all over the country for service delivery. The micro merchant value chain starts by taking the orders from the customers. The micro merchants will take the orders from the customers also at the very beginning of the process they will be tasked with the responsibility to open the bank accounts for the customers. After taking the order from the customers the micro merchants will then place it to the e-commerce partners. From the eCommerce partners the order will be handed over to the logistic partner who will deliver the product to the UDCE. The logistics partner's responsibility is to safely carry the product to the UDCE with efficiency. On the other hand, a large portion of the rural population are handicapped socially: the women. The nature of rural people are still conservative on some locations; the women cannot go far for jobs, even if they are encouraged and allowed. The families lose a probable source of livelihood and cannot contribute to family income. They stay at home, do the housework, but do not bring any sustainable value. On the chance that they are open to jobs, the available options have the possibility of not being women friendly and unsafe for them to work in. There are next to no opportunities for them. a2i and by that extent ekShop will focus on the unemployed rural women, farmers and the rural producers who are not getting a fair price. Having a lack of job to occupy them, the women have ample time to take in the locality they live in and are in possession of knowledge of the community. If taken into account the heap of knowledge they have - local knowledge of territory, people and families - women can be utilised like that.

Conclusion

Bangladesh's gender norms are rooted in its patrilineal system and linked to religious values and practices. The system, especially in rural areas, limit women's mobility and visibility outside their districts. Cultural strictness holds them back inside their households as well. Through the country's economic growth, it has also provided many opportunities for women in Bangladesh. It has challenged them

and also presented a new set of obstacles for them to overcome. Initiatives have started focusing on gender inequality with their development interventions, targeting women and girls, with emphasis on education, health and economic empowerment (World Bank, 2015). Previously, development interventions have done little to address gender norms on women's mobility and tend to glaze over the actual problems (IGWG, 2004). Critical commentators have noted, that focusing directly on women entrepreneurship and normalizing their places and scopes of work have been fruitful. a2i's initiatives of incorporating and normalizing basic literacy skills and economic freedom have been a great contribution.

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GENDER EQUALITY IN DIFFERENT AREAS: IS IT REALY FOLLOWED?

Gender equality in a lay man's term means fairness for both genders. We can then like "fairness" to impartiality. The big question is, is the society and the people who live therein IMPARTIAL? Do we as a people possess value that could make us impartial to our fellow human?

I reside in Lagos Nigeria. Few years back, I was working at the Island part of Lagos. Due to bad road network and traffic congestion I get home really late into the night.

More often than not, i will be the only woman in a sixteen seated bus. You could read the minds of the few men present in the bus through their facial reactions. Some give you the look of "WHAT IS SHE STILL DOING OUT BY THIS TIME OF THE DAY".

I pay no attention to them. I am mostly concern about my safety because in our clime there is high rate of crime perpetrated through the use of public transport. Are mine suppose to feel awkward for coming back quite late into the night due to reasons beyond my control bearing in mind that I was trying to make an honest living as an undergraduate in order to train myself through school? Why should I be made to feel guilty for trying to make an honest living?

Societal construct made it in such a way in our clime that as a woman when you are seen outside late at night then you are perceive as being irresponsible. Why should the time of the day a person choose to return to her abode be a measure of how responsible they are?

Getting into the neighbourhood, you see neighbours that are still awake look at you with disdain due to the impression they have made of you.

Nobody treats a man like that. NOBODY.

I get home and the first thing my mum says is "You are a woman and you shouldn't be coming home late". I always feel embarrassed but say nothing about

it. I have always thought to myself if she will hold same opinion strongly if i was to be a man. Although I know she says it out of concern yet it is largely dependent on societal construct that have consciously and unconsciously define what a man or a woman should do and how they should do it.

As a mature adult who has a right to freedom of movement I should be able to go out within the time and hours that is convenient for me and also return back home in the same manner without being define by that.

Sometime back I was having a random conversation with my friend and our line of conversation tilted towards the time she gets back and what she goes through as regards to that. I gave a grin because I know it was very well relatable. She said "I have am no longer bothered and I have grown pass what anyone feel about me due to the time I get home which is largely dependent on so many factors that are not within my control." She went further by saying that is mother even nicknamed her "Daughter of the Dark" LOL!

After I had the conversation with her I could see that even freedom of movement for a woman is still very much restricted by the society at large.

Funning enough, most young men that you see within late hours of the day are actually trying to carry out one form of crime or another. This isn't to exclude the fact that women commit crime too.

Has anyone thought that instead of restricting the movement of women in Lagos Nigeria, the factors causing them to get back home late like their male counterpart should be look into?

And if isn't looked into, then no woman should mean to feel guilty for that.

Another story related to this was the one told to me by a former church member about the time she leaves home for work because of the distance of her working place from her place of residence. She leaves home between 4 :00 am to 4:30am so that she can get to work before her resumption time and gets back to her home by almost midnight. She did that routine for years before she got married. She was thankful that her husband place of residence was closer to her working place. Imagine a woman who doesn't feel the need to get married will continue that routine and yet still face bullying from friends, loved loves, family members, neighbours and the society at large.

Away from timing and movement is the interesting part of sitting position in the vehicle. I am someone who is very much concern about the sitting position I took in a bus because I am quite tall and so I would like to sit where my legs can be properly place to prevent muscle cramps.

Most times, i am being challenge for sitting in a particular position especially the seat by the driver side because i am a woman and you hear things like this in vernacular " you wey be woman they want to sit for front" sometimes i ignore and

still proceed to sitting there without paying attention to the person grieving that i am sitting in a place i don't fit for me and my health.

Sadly, some driver and conductor will insist that a woman shouldn't sit in front and would want to make a drama out of the scenario. In such situation, it would be needless proving a point. I rather move away and try boarding another one.

Who made the rules? Most women have ask this question yet no concrete answer has been given.

I always say that someone made the rules and in the same manner someone else will break the rule so long it isn't causing harm to anyone. I have realised that there are mental stereotype people have developed when it comes to the subject of gender equality.

I entered a bus one day and I sat in front. There was still a space for one more passenger. A grown up man indicated interest that he wanted to sit in front as well. I opened the door and got down for him to sit inward so that I maintain my position close to the door. He felt bad that a woman has to come down for him to move inward. His countenance changed and he kept a long face. I try to make him smile and I told him politely that I would like my legs to be placed properly that are why I didn't move inward. I like to pick a convenient spot and if someone pick the spot before me, I wouldn't be bother nor feel entitled to it. The truth is I didn't owe him any explanation whatsoever but I felt I should be civil since I am aware that people aren't open minded when it comes to certain issue.

The young man and i had moved passed that and changed the conversation into a more interesting topic away from the sitting position palava. All of a sudden, the bus conductor interrupted because he wanted to re-adjust the door since it wasn't locked firmly. He brought up the issue of me sitting inward again and he said "you are a woman and you should have being seated inward and guarded by the man that was on your left hand side". I completely ignored him. I know that he was only acting base on his level of understanding. To him a woman is weak and should always show her vulnerability.

Isn't it even funny that women are prevented from sitting in a particular position in a vehicle yet they pay same amount of money for boarding the bus as their male counterpart?

Every woman like me is judged for trying to challenge the norm. You are seen as a rebel for demanding that you are treated fairly like your male counterpart. Why shouldn't I be able to sit where i don't fit in a public bus without being bullied by the gender that perceive themselves as being superior to me? Why do men think that we are asking for too much when it comes to benefitting from what they benefit as well? The society has so made them entitled that they think everything is their right. This is not even as a result of being educated or not but from what

they have absorbed mentally as right or wrong.

I as a woman should get the same opportunities and privileges my male counterparts get. All gender are same and equal even though they are distinct by their sexual organs.

I used the above scenario as a point for my discussion because they have not being taken notice of by a lot of people and those who could have observe may have pass it on has being inconsequential. We forget that these little seamless things have a way of affecting the totality of our life.

For gender equality, our leaders, law makers and those generally on the helm of affairs choose and approves the one that is beneficial to the.

Most especially in Nigeria my country, the cankerworm called "SELF" has eaten deep into so many of us both young and old that we hardly call these things what they really are if it isn't directly affecting us. Those that we think are fighting for gender equality are doing it using double standard. And the few who are genuinely fighting for gender equality gets little or no support at all.

In all my experiences of being bullied because I am a woman and I wanted to do what I deem right for me which isn't causing harm to anyone, i hardly find a voice at that moment who is willing to speak for me.

The issue of gender inequality as also thrive for so long because of the "THE CULTURE OF SILENCE." No one wants to be the bad egg and most who try to do so are scared of standing alone. I know that the battle of inequality is really a tough battle to win but it is really possible to win it if we all can have a voice saying and demanding for same things.

Most of the gender stereotypes are roles created by a human. It has being accepted overtime, therefore a lot of live with it and resigned to fate that there is really nothing I/ We would be able to do about it.

I will reiterate again that someone made the rules; therefore, someone has to break it. Because nature abhors vacuum, therefore, the person who broke the rule will have to make new ones that are suitable for both gender.

The International Human Rights Law Framework prohibits gender stereotypes and stereotyping because it undermines the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is also one of the leading causes of discrimination against women and a contributing factor in violations of a vast array of rights.

We are obligated to eliminate discrimination of both genders in all areas of their lives. This will not happen unless we take appropriate measures to seeing that the root cause of gender stereotyping are addressed to that a whole lot of us can refrain from it.

Although gender stereotyping is quite encompassing because it is largely fuelled

by culture and religion, yet it can still be put to a stop.

Gender roles should cut across all gender. Since both male and female and conceive through the same process then societal construct shouldn't make one at a disadvantage than the other.

Both private and public personnel shouldn't stop addressing the issue of gender stereotype. More awareness should be created more than ever because on the part of women it limits the development of their natural talent, abilities as well as their educational and professional experiences.

I attended a conference few months ago and when it was time for the pitch competition for a grant my attention was drawn to a foundation that is strictly for training girls on building and construction. The founder was asked why she started the foundation and she said it was largely dependent on the fact that the building and construction industry is largely dominated by males and rarely will you see a female.

They will use the foundation to create awareness by going to secondary schools to enlighten the female teenagers on the need to pursue a career in building and construction and to expose them to various opportunities available for them in that path.

That is a great step in the right direction. The founder of that foundation has identified a need and they prefer a solution immediately in order to fill the gender gap.

Gender equality can be solve when we individually pick a problem and prefer solution to it per time without waiting for some else to solve it while we do nothing about it. Even if it is what we do not have the capacity and means of doing, we can write to appropriate authorities so that they can do it and try to make them accountable.

I am sure there are other organization like the one i mentioned above who are working on closing the gender gap created by culture, religion and the society.

There is a saying that “ We can't do everything but we can all do one thing.”

Let's all come together with one voice and identify all the stereotyping roles created by humans concerning gender roles and then put an end to it. If you think you will do nothing about it because you are not directly affected , I am sorry to disappoint you by telling you that you will be indirectly affected.

I studied Food Technology at undergraduate level even though i am trying to transition into Data Science. One thing I discovered during the course of my study is that, my department was female dominated. The ratio of the boys to girls was one to ten. For this reason, the few male student present were often mocked and made jest of by their other counterparts in a male dominated department that they are studying Food Technology. We had very brilliant male counters that were even

topping the class but imagine that they are mostly unrecognized because people feel that they are sissy. One day i went into one of the cyber cafe in school with a male colleague and we were about making some printings when one of the men in charge ask him our course of study and he replied the man. The man gave a funny grin and said “that one na woman course na. Why you go they study woman course na?” neither i nor my colleague responded to him.

Sadly the gender issue isn't limited to only the female. The male as well have their own share of the whole issue.

The picture and perception we have over certain things were influenced by our environments and the people around us. That is why when we notice people do or say certain things that we perceive is as a result of gender discrimination, we shouldn't hold back from enlightening and educating them on the right things.

- *The views expressed by the author in this article are his own.*

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GENDER EQUALITY IN WORKPLACE

Ms. Souhir Boukhris

Social Activist, , Tunisia, North Africa

Gender equality

The word gender describes the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women. Gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, education, and personal development. Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. It includes increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power and control over her own life inside and outside the home, and her ability to effect change. Gender issues are not focused on women alone, but on the relationship between men and women in society. The actions and attitudes of men and boys play an essential role in achieving gender equality.

Gender equality at work

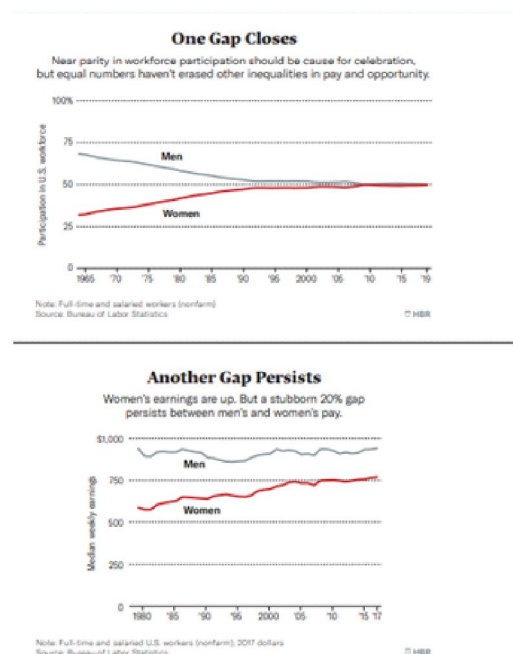
In a labor market, the gender difference is presented as gender inequality where women and men are treated differently in their jobs. Those inequalities are showed in many different ways such as pay gap and the importance of the job allocated to women and men.

By looking back at the history, women are with high expectation in taking responsibility in family rather than in work. Since women spent most of their time in childcare, men have to become the breadwinner in the family.

Myriad people believe women are less productive than men and that is why women and men are treated in two different ways.

Working Women: Participation and the earnings Gap

Over the past several decades, women have increased their participation in the labor force. They are more heavily represented in some industries in the economy, while other industries continue to work to recruit them. As women have joined the labor force in greater numbers, their wages have improved compared with those of men, but a gap remains. As in USA ,the number of man and women in workforce is equal but women's earnings 20% less than men .



Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is no joke. Between men and women, the gender pay gap ranges from 3% to 51% and on average sits at 17%. However, we need to consider the two measurements of the gender pay gap — adjusted and unadjusted.

Now, you've probably heard that women make 78 cents to every \$1 that men make. This refers to the unadjusted gender pay gap which factors in the average salary of men and women.

The adjusted gender pay gap takes into account factors like differences in education, occupations chosen, skills, hours worked and job experience. With the adjusted gender pay gap, women make about 95 cents to every \$1 that men make.

When considering the gender pay gap, you must account for the fact that more women are segregated to lower-level jobs in low-paying industries and are unable to obtain upper-level roles due to biases and the glass ceiling. These disparities in

opportunities, prevent women from excelling in their career and inhibits their ability to make the same amount as men. At every stage of their careers, women face barriers that place them at a disadvantage for career opportunities, mentorships, promotions and pay raises.

For a clearer comparison of ‘unadjusted’ and ‘adjusted’ gender pay gap, we’ve included Glassdoor’s breakdown of the two types of gender pay gap in the the graph below.

	"UNADJUSTED" BASE GENDER PAY GAP		"ADJUSTED" BASE GENDER PAY GAP	
	Average Cents/Pence Earned by Women Per Dollar/Pound/Euro of Male Earnings	Percentage Male Pay Advantage	Average Cents/Pence Earned by Women Per Dollar/Pound/Euro of Male Earnings	Percentage Male Pay Advantage
Australia	0.85	15.1%	0.97	3.1%
France	0.88	11.6%	0.96	3.7%
Canada	0.84	16.1%	0.96	4.0%
United States	0.79	21.4%	0.95	4.9%
United Kingdom	0.82	17.9%	0.95	5.0%
Singapore	0.87	12.8%	0.95	5.2%
Germany	0.78	22.3%	0.94	6.4%
Netherlands	0.81	18.9%	0.93	6.6%

Source: Glassdoor Economic Research (Glassdoor.com/research)

Women in management

Progress at the top is constrained by a “broken rung.” The biggest obstacle women face on the path to senior leadership is at the first step up to manager. For every 100 men promoted and hired to manager, only 72 women are promoted and hired. This broken rung results in more women getting stuck at the entry level, and fewer women becoming managers. Not surprisingly, men end up holding 62 percent of manager-level positions, while women hold just 38 percent.

This early inequality has a long-term impact on the talent pipeline. Since men significantly outnumber women at the manager level, there are significantly fewer women to hire or promote to senior managers. The number of women decreases at every subsequent level. So even as hiring and promotion rates improve for women at senior levels, women as a whole can never catch up. There are simply too few women to advance.

Women in technical work

The research in various countries shows that women tend to be marginalized in technical jobs. Gender-stereotype, in which women are positioned in jobs relating to domestic sphere still occurs. There are three types of gender bias in workplace

namely “prove-it-again bias”, “tightrope bias” and the “maternal wall” [1]. These mean that women have to look more professional and demonstrate technical prowess at all times to receive the same respect as a male engineer, women must operate within a narrow range of acceptable behavior that is neither too feminine nor too masculine to avoid being branded “emotional”, and the ideal worker is always available for work and that mothers do not — or should not — remain committed to their careers

Engaged women

One of the gender-bias problems happening to the employees graduating from vocational schools is the assumption that a woman is (always) single in her status, so that her job health insurance is merely valid to herself, not for her family. This occurs because of the assumption that the one who is responsible in a family is a husband. This occurs because the cultural assumption that men are the breadwinners, while women take care of the household, is still very strong in Indonesian society. As a result, when women are employed, their position is assumed to be merely that of an ‘additional’ breadwinner.

Pregnant women

Several companies have attempted to fulfill the gender needs to male and female employees. Some health-examination facilities are provided to female employees when they are having pregnancy for their first and second pregnancies, leaves for giving birth of the first and second children and the insurance for giving birth for the first and second children. However, a number of companies have not provided a breastfeeding room to women who want to give breastfeeding to their children. Female workers particularly working at industries state that they can't possibly ask for a leave for their pregnancy in accordance with the policy set out by the government [12]. The research reveals that one of the companies will even expel the female employees without giving them severance if they get pregnant. Moreover, if the company permits the female employee to get back to work, they should restart their career from zero (contract workers with adjusted wages). Besides the leave entitlement of giving birth, which is not in accordance with the government policy, the right usually not fulfilled by the company is that of female workers for not being permitted to go home for breastfeeding their babies. If they are allowed, they should follow complicated procedure and even can lead to payroll deduction. The company does not provide day care and breastfeeding facilities

Women's protest

Despite the frustrating pace of progress — or maybe because of it — something

fundamental has begun to shift in the United States and around the world. Women are sharing their stories, marching, walking out, running for office, and winning elections in record numbers. The media is amplifying their voices and asking hard questions of the institutions that continue to lock women out. Business leaders are under new pressure to demonstrate that their companies care about gender equality and are committed to being part of the solution. Global leaders are now expected to have answers about how women and girls fit into their agendas.

In the wake of #MeToo, #TimesUp, #BlackLivesMatter, and recent accounts of racial profiling in commercial settings, issues of gender are center stage. The corporate world has taken notice, and many high-profile companies are parting ways with perpetrators, revisiting their diversity records, and revising their policies for addressing complaints of bias. For corporations that are addressing discrimination claims, and that are interested in taking an evidence-based approach to remedying discrimination — in the wake of litigation or otherwise, what to do is simple: Set diversity goals, make staff accountable, and monitor progress toward them.

Do Lawsuits Improve Gender Equality at Work?

But a few stories of change don't necessarily mean litigation is, in general, an effective tool for fighting harassment and bias in companies. By most accounts, diversity gains have leveled over the last decade, and high-profile companies continue to rack up fines for discrimination. Fortune 500 companies alone have paid out nearly \$2 billion (in disclosed penalties) since 2000, with many repeat offenders.

The recent research of Elizabeth Hirsh and Youngjoo Cha, published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, looks at whether such lawsuits bring about gender and racial equity, especially when accompanied by market pressures, press coverage, and mandated policy changes

They found that lawsuits did have equity-enhancing effects: Regardless of whether it involved sex, race, color, or national origin, a discrimination lawsuit produced measurable gains in managerial representation.

But the conditions of the legal resolutions mattered considerably. They found that the impact of lawsuits varied depending on whether the national media took notice and by whether the resolutions brought monetary payouts or additional pressures for change, including policy change mandates.

Conclusion

The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index measures gender equality based on women's representation in the workforce and public office, as well as

health and education outcomes. According to WEF's projections, at the current rate of change the United States is still 208 years away from achieving gender equality (compared with Canada's projected 51-year timeline and the United Kingdom's 74-year timeline to close their gender gaps).

Accordingly, the governments should supervise the companies to implement gender mainstreaming in the workplace, especially in the employees' career development. Moreover, the governments should also give rewards to companies implementing gender equality and otherwise they should also give punishments to companies which have marginalized women in the workplace.

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GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA AND WOMEN PROTECTING LAWS.

Rabindra Nath Sarmah

*M.A, D.T.Tech,
Retired Additional Director of Handloom and Textiles,
Assam and managing Director of Artfed*

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination towards women in our Country is said to be a social disease from time beyond memory and having unknown origination. Often people say about equality in status, sex, opportunity, dignity, respect etc. in civilized modern society in spite of claims for protection of all these, coming from individual capacity, combined voice, institutional attempt, political demand, discrimination still exists and stands as an evil of the modern society.

Discrimination means the practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people, in a patriarchal society like ours, this discrimination may be used to mean violence against women.

Justice Krishna Iyer in his view on gender related justice as reflected in his work “ Law and Life” opined that.

“The fight is not for women’s status, but for human worth. The claim is not to end inequality of women, but to restore universal justice. The bid is not for leaves and fishes for the forsaken gender but for cosmic harmony which never comes till woman comes.”

United nations General Assembly defines “violence against women” as any act of gender based violence, that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life.

According to National Crime Records Bureau of India, twenty crimes of different

nature are committed every hour against women which means a crime towards women per three minutes. Data also reveals that every twenty of one hundred of world's female population have been abused by a man at some point of their life.

Common Crimes against women in our society include, domestic violence, dowry related violence, educational deprivation, child marriage, sexual abuse at workplace, discrimination towards women employees, deprivation from paternal property, want of special provisions in workplace, unequal salary pattern for work, Rape, trafficking, etc. etc.

In protecting women from gender based discrimination, various provisions are made in our constitution along with Legislations, defining various acts that fall under crime and prescribing punishment for the persons and bodies committing such crimes.

(A) CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS :-

Constitution of India plays a pioneer role in protecting the women from discrimination and ensuring gender justice. Constitution being the supreme Law of the land significantly address the question related to women and also responds to the challenges. The whole legal system is to be framed according to the provisions of the constitution of India. Following are few examples.

- i) Article 14 of the constitution reads as "the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India"

With the support of this Article, Court can command the state to give equal treatment to similarly situated persons. Article 14 would apply only when invidious discrimination is meted to equals and similarly circumstanced without any rational basis or relationship.

The Supreme Court in *Muthamma V union of India* and *Air India V Nargesh Mirza*, struck down discriminatory service condition requiring female employees to obtain government permission before marriage and denying marriage, and pregnant women's right to be employed.

- ii) Article 15: provides, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste sex or place of birth.

Article 15(1) specially prohibits any kind of discrimination against women on the basis of sex, caste etc. and Article 15(3) makes special provision for the women favoring laws.

- iii) Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

1. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

2. No citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, decent place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for or discrimination against in respect or any employment or office under the state.
 3. Nothing in this Article shall prevent parliament from making any Law prescribing in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office under Government or any local or other authority under the state.
- iv) Article 21 : Protection of life and personal liberty- No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty, except according to procedure established by law.
- The woman's right to make reproductive choices is also a dimension of "personal Liberty", as understood under Article 21. It is important to recognize that reproductive choices can be exercised to procreate as well as to abstain from procreating. The crucial consideration is that woman's privacy, dignity and bodily integrity should be respected. This means there should be no restriction what so ever on the exercise of reproduction choices such as a woman's right to refuse participation in sexual activity or insisting on use of contraceptive methods. Furthermore, women are free to chose birth control methods, such as undergoing sterilization procedures. Taken to their logical conclusion, reproductive rights include a woman's entitlement to carry a pregnancy to its full term, to give birth and subsequently to raise children.
- v) Article 39(a) : the state to direct its policy towards securing men and women equality their right to an adquate means of livelihood.
- vi) Article 39(d): State to direct policies of equal pay for equal work for both men and women .
- vii) Article 42 : The state to provide provision for securing just and human conditions of work and for maternity relief.
- viii) Article 51(A)(e) : To promote harmony and spirit of common brotherhood amongst the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities, to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of woman.
- ix) Article 243 i) (3) : not less than one third (including the number of seats reserved for woman belonging to se and S.T.) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat, shall be reserved for woman and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constitution in a Panchayat.
- x) Article 243 i)(4) : The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats, or any

other level shall be reserved for S.C, S.T, and woman in such a manner as the legislature of a state by law, provide.

I) LEGAL PROVISIONS :-

To uphold the constitutional mandate, the state has enacted various legislations, intending to ensure equal rights to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and provide support services specially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'murder', 'robbery', cheating etc. the crimes which are directed specifically against women are characterized as 'crime against women'. These are broadly classified in to two categories.

1. The Crimes identified under Indian Penal Code(IPC)
 - i) Rape(Sec 376 IPC)
 - ii) Kidnapping and abduction for different purposes (Sec 363 to 373 IPC)
 - iii) Homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempt (Sec 302, 304-B IPC)
 - iv) Both physical and mental torture (Sec 498-A IPC)
 - v) Molestation (Sec354 IPC)
 - vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec 509 IPC)n
 - vii) Importation of girls up to 21 years of age.
2. The Crimes identified under the special Law
 - i) Employees state insurance Act, 1948
 - ii) Plantation Labor Act, 1951
 - iii) Family Courts Act,1954
 - iv) The special marriage Act,1954
 - v) The Hindu Marriage Act,1955
 - vi) The Hindu Succession Act,1956 with amendment in 2005
 - vii) Immoral traffic(Prevention) Act,1961
 - viii) The maternity benefit Act,1961 amended in 1995
 - ix) Dowry prohibition Act,1961
 - x) The Medical Termination of pregnancy Ac,1971
 - xi) The Contract Labor (Regulation and Prohibition) Act,1976
 - xii) The equal remuneration Act,1976

- xiii) The Prohibition of child marriage Act, 2006
- xiv) The criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1986.
- xv) Indecent Representations of women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.
- xvi) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 2005.
- xvii) Bill against triple talaque-2019.

II) SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN :-

- i) National Commission for women :- In journey 1992, the Government set up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and legal safe guards provided for woman, to review the existing legislations, to suggest amendments where necessary etc.
- ii) Reservation of women in local self Government:- The 73rd constitutional amendment Act, passed in 1992, ensure one third of the total seats for women, in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural or urban areas.
- iii) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child : - (1991-2000) The plan of action was to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
- iv) National policy for empowerment of woman, 2001. The department of women and child development in the ministry of human. Resource development has prepared a national policy for the empowerment of women in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Conclusion :-

Law alone cannot change the society, but can bring positive changes and ensure that discrimination cannot be allowed in a civilized society. People's awareness, co-operation and participation can only make the laws enacted so far and to be enacted in future successful.

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GENDER DIFFERENCES ~ CHILDREN CAN DO MORE

Birgit 'Gigi' Bayer,
Social Activist, Germany

The most profound difference is the difference between girls and boys and I am afraid we pay too little attention to this fact in our upbringing. If the specific needs of girls were previously ignored in the past, today it affects boys, and for a variety of reasons, not least because many are almost exclusively surrounded by women, boys are increasingly less able to cope with school requirements than girls. Now it is also statistically clear that they learn less and graduate less frequently than girls and that fewer young men finish their studies than young women. Their interests differ from the start. Most boys are more interested in adventure and technology, girls are still more interested in social and artistic things, but together they find animals and nature interesting. When girls watch the robot build and then join and boys watch the finger puppet play, they benefit from each other's skills in their field.

The gender roles in socially weak families are much more strictly fixed than it is common in middle-class circles the girls should be reserved and well-behaved or attracted like little Barbie Dolls, the boys are expected to be daring, very aggressive and cheeky middle and upper-class children, this fact blurs much more. Differentiation is the answer to the fact that no child is like the other and that, even with the best will in the world, that everybody else comes from somewhere else and has different preferences. Differentiation comes in the child's urge and the ability to act independently, taking responsibility, controlling their own work, being with others ~ in short it's about idiosyncrasies, independence, freedom of communication, their own rhythm, their own abilities and their own way to the goal - all of this must be allowed and it is desirable, yes, that should be the essence of bringing up girls and boys.

A design that confirms your gender and thus your own identity is of great importance for many people, whether young or old, male or female, light or dark-skinned, not only because it represents a central selection criterion. Personal thoughts and assessments on gender in design:

Against the background of the topic of transsexuality, which is currently the subject of lively debate in politics, there is in my opinion no reason to equip all products, offers and services with gender-neutral design. Because, and that's a good thing: we're not all the same. We learn that we are an I, something that is different from the others and deliberately differentiates them. "The encounter gives us identity, more and more in the course of life. I can only gain an identity by comparing myself with my counterparts," says Musholt. This is another reason why distinctive features are essential. Boys don't like blue because there is a biological reason for it. With blue, black, gray sweaters and trousers, their chances of being marginalized due to clothing are reduced. The same applies to girls with pink clothes. The choice of colors also serves for self-protection.

Richard E. Heyman, Ashley N. Hunt, [...], and Amy M. Smith Slep wrote in their Article about 'Desired change in couples gender differences and effects on communication':

"In the few studies that have investigated male- and female-initiated conversations, communication affect and behavior differed depending on whose topic was being discussed. One study found that women, compared with men, displayed more negative affect in both male- and female-initiated conversations and more positive affect only during female-initiated discussions (Johnson et al., 2005). Another series of studies investigated the demand / withdrawal pattern, which has been associated with poor relationship adjustment (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Previous research suggested that women, compared with men, were more typically the demanders during conflict discussions, whereas men were more likely withdrawers (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). This varied, however, depending on whose topic was discussed. During women's conversations, female-demand / male-withdrawal was more likely, but during men's topics, men and women did not differ on demand or withdrawal.

Sagrestano, Christensen, and Heavey (1998) (using the same samples as Christensen & Heavey, 1990 and Heavey et al., 1993) reported that men's and women's (a) influence techniques and (b) attributions were influenced by whose topic was being discussed. These studies emphasize the importance of controlling who initiates discussions because who has a greater investment in the issue being discussed appears to influence the interaction.

We hypothesize that as women's adjustment decreases, they desire more change from their partners than men do. In other words, we hypothesize that men and women who are more satisfied are more similar in the amount of change they desire than are men and women who are less satisfied. Fourth, as noted earlier, it is possible that one's own adjustment and one's partner's adjustment predicts one's desire for change; alternatively, one's own adjustment may not predict desired change once the partner's adjustment is taken into account.

In my own "case" I was always very different. Playing table tennis with the

altar boys under the catholic church was one of my favourite games beside kicking the football with the boys from the neighbourhood and I loved to play with “LEGO” and with other boy toys rather than with dolls! As a almost 53 year old woman I still play the football with the Youth being trained by my almost 17year old son having the best time of my life being me and not someone who depends on any confirmation from anybody. And I am asking myself: why the whole discussion about gender, when we just love each other the way someone trial is without the desire to change or adjust the opposite sex or the partner.

It makes no sense at all, isn't it so?

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ADVERTISEMENTS AND GENDER STEREOTYPING : THE UNSPOKEN RULES

Ms. Paulina Terkper,
M.Phil English
University of Education, Winneba- Ghana, West Africa

One of the main concerns of feminism as a movement, or of feminist criticism, is the representation of women in literature. It is one of, if not the major basis on which feminism was founded. This concern of feminists could be said to have been born out of the fact that literature by its very nature transcends space and time, and is a very strong and potent tool for informing as well as 'misleading' people. It is what is documented that new generations come to learn of as their history and which they will be socialized into believing and practicing as the norm, not only for them, but for generations after them. Logically, what is handed down to a generation as their culture is what they will hand down to their younger ones. This means that the wrong representation of anything in society can have as far-fetched an effect as misinforming many people who come into contact with it thousands of years after the image was created, hence, there was the urgent need for something to be done about the negative and inferior ways in which women were being documented in history. On these grounds, Feminism arose in the 1960s and 70s as a response to the long existing social ideology of patriarchy. In the literature of that time, women were represented in particular ways as an expression of the social norms about women and their social roles, and as a means of socialization of younger generations.

Discourse and society have always had a dialectal relationship, and thus it is undisputed that the culture of a people will be reflected in their literature. Like Michel Foucault rightly posits, discourse when it is defined as social action refers to "practices that systematically form the object of which they speak." In this sense, the representations of each of the sexes, the beliefs, as well as the set standards of behaviours, and reactions of society towards them are what forms discourse on gender, which in turn constructs or sketches images of what it entails to be a man or woman, or at least what they are expected to be. This, in essence prescribes what they should not or cannot be as per the standards of society.

Literary theorists who ascribe to New Historicism believe that “Literary works may or may not tell us about various factual aspects of the world from which they emerge, but they will tell us about prevailing ways of thinking at the time: ideas of social organization, prejudices, taboos, etc.”. New Historicists, insist that “ideology manifests itself in literary productions, and discourse point to the culturally specific nature of texts as products of particular periods and discursive formations, while viewing reality—history—as itself mediated by linguistic codes which it is impossible to bypass in the recuperation of past cultures.” This aptly captures and reinforces the idea that culture is indeed reflected in literature.

With the turning of the world into a global village and the dynamic ways in which the communication landscape has changed, advertisements have become a major mode of communication in society. This is a direct effect of industrialization, as more and more products; goods and services, are being produced day in and out to meet the ever growing needs and demands of modern day life.

A few selected definitions that clearly reveal the nature of advertisement are presented here. Stanton (2002) defines advertising as consisting of “all activities involved in presenting to a group a non-personal, oral or visual, openly sponsored identified message regarding a product, service, or idea.” In the view of Kotler (2011) “Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of goods, services, or ideas by an identified sponsor.” Bovee on the other hand, adds to the discourse by defining advertising as “the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media”. (Bovee, 1992, p. 7). We find the following common elements that run through all the definitions: there is always an identified sponsor; adverts are presented to particular groups, which means there is a target audience; and the goal is usually to induce people to buy. It follows, therefore, that advertisement is undisputedly a dominant element of market promotion.

The increased rate of advertisements is in a bid to attract potential buyers or to make existing ones loyal consumers of particular brands since there is high competition on the market, and each business needs to survive. This makes advertisement something sort of the “soul” of businesses these days, as without effective advertisement, a producer of consumer goods is likely to lose his/her customers to other producers of similar goods and services who are more skilled at advertising their products. Undisputedly, consumer behaviour is largely influenced both consciously and unconsciously by advertisements, hence, a producer of goods which are not as high in quality as others of their kind on the market may easily get away with high patronage based merely on the way they advertise their product. It is worthy to note that advertisements come in various forms across various media. They come in print and electronic forms – audiovisual or audio only forms, and the major actors are either celebrities in society or randomly selected people who embody the elements or qualities the advertiser wishes to promote.

The foregoing clearly shows the place of advertisement in society now, making it a key area to look at content-wise, in terms of what message is being carried along in society, and to what extent that is a reflection of what a society is inherently like. This is necessary because the advent of various social media has put everything—both good and bad at the disposal of the society— young and old, and while some sites do well to censor and filter the content that is transmitted through their media, other social media fail to do so, or even if they wish to do so, may not be able to do it perfectly. This puts the younger generation at risk of consuming content that is not very good for them and which most likely can have an effect on the formation of attitudes since they are still in their formative years and are more susceptible to picking up wrong attitudes or values if they are not guided closely by those responsible for raising them. Even adults in some instances are susceptible to the sometimes misleading information contained in adverts and can be swayed by deceptive promises of results that can be achieved by patronizing and using particular goods or services.

The discussion above establishes the prominence of place of advertisements in society now making it a force to reckon with in terms of information that is passed on, and this sets the background for the discussion that follows.

Similar or Entirely Different? Sketching Portraits of Men and Women; the Stereotype versus the Contemporary

This section discusses how women and men are portrayed in advertisements throwing light on both subtle and overt ways in which they are sketched in ads. The social construct in patriarchy, before the rise of feminism was of males as superior and women as inferior or second to them. This is the idea feminism has sought to dispute all these years, but the question is; has feminism succeeded in effectively deconstructing the stereotypical image of women or are there still subtle traces of the stereotype in the way women are seen and portrayed in adverts? And to what extent is that a reflection of present day society?

Worthy of note is the fact that feminism has gained many grounds in recent times and has succeeded in reclaiming the female identity as more valuable and prestigious than it was portrayed in the days of patriarchy. Mostly, in literature, great efforts have been made by various writers; both feminist and non-feminist, to redeem the image of the woman, and there is now a considerable amount of literature which highlight positive, noble and admirable achievements and qualities of women, which is a good development. Again, in almost all spheres of life, whether in academia, in science, in professional circles and others, women have made their mark. But do our adverts say the same? Have they evolved along with the reclaimed identity of the woman? Or are there still traces of the stereotype in the way women are portrayed?

Traditionally, women were represented as one of the following archetypes: a slave (one who must serve her man), or the stereotypical housewife who is a “slave” to her family, overworked and underappreciated; a virgin or a prostitute – a virgin being regarded as the more noble of the two for preserving herself *for her man* who supposedly deserves the ‘best’ version of a woman ; and a prostitute – the one seen as wayward; the prize- where a boyfriend or man wins her hand in marriage just by virtue of his noble birth or because he is considered to have admirable qualities. In all of these representations of the woman, the relevance of her existence is found in a male figure. The man was captured as central to the existence of a woman in the sense that a man (husband) marries a wife and makes her a housewife to cater for his needs, the worth of a virgin or prostitute is measured through the lens of a man, and a young lad wins the hand of a maid as a reward for an achievement in society. In all these examples as cited above, one thing is obvious. The place of the man as superior is established by the mere fact that he is born male. Sadly, the plight of the woman is that she has to prove her worth by her every action.

This superior-inferior role relationship between men and women as it is in society is replicated in advertisements. Just like women are seen as housewives, and barred from venturing into certain professions because those professions were described as “not a woman’s thing”, similar images are projected in adverts. In most adverts, women are pictured selling products for home use such as detergents, food or food-flavours, home décor etc. and recommending such products for their quality. Here, the idea of the woman as a wife, baby-mama or caterer is what is projected. We see the woman carved in the light of a *homemaker*, which is in line with the stereotypical image. In other type of adverts, women are employed to advertise products like cars and hard liquor which are not associated them, but with men, and in such adverts women are used as objects of sexual appeal to men. Chances that one will find a sexily dressed woman in a sensual position in or somewhere around the car being advertised is higher than one would find a man. The question is, if the product is not directly related to women but to men, why are men not employed to act in such adverts? It is obvious here how sex as an emotion is employed to attract male patronisers. Also, the other unspoken message is that “most” women fancy men who own cars or are into liquor, hence, owning one of such cars will most likely attract a woman. Here, even though a car is what is being advertised, the implicit message is *the woman as the goal* in the long run. “You own the car, you get as many women as you want”, which is a demeaning representation of women.

The Unspoken *Exist In Your Territory or Do Things Within Your Limits* Rule

In recent times, even with the dynamic roles of men and women in society

now, where we find more women in unconventional professions such as architecture, engineering, legal practice, management and the like, which hitherto were considered to require high mental abilities, thus, the sole preserve of men. We also find men in professions such as catering, fashion designing, and various forms of art, which were considered for the likes of women. There, however, seems to exist an invisible limit on how far women or men can go. Though this is unspoken, there seems to be the rule that even if women break barriers and are in traditional male territory, they cannot attain the same level as men, and so a woman who finds herself in such territory has to do whatever it is she is doing with a touch of femininity. *So, if you're a woman in the legal profession, practise law like a woman. If you're a female architect, do it like a woman.* Also, we find that though women have been allowed to get into traditional male territory, men have done their best to limit themselves such that there are things you will hardly find men doing. Hardly will a man be portrayed as a homemaker or allow himself to exhibit emotions the same way a woman would, because it is thought of as characteristic of women, thus, a man who exhibits such emotions as crying or getting overly excited about something is perceived as not man enough or described as “effeminate”, and this description when used in such a context, comes with a negative connotation, making being feminine look like a weakness. What this seems to communicate is that there are things that are by default for women only, and no matter how high or far a woman goes in any field, she is still a woman, and is inherently second-place to the man. The opposite goes for men. In a sense, this tells of the fact that some things will stick with women no matter what. An interesting example that illustrates this “Exist In Your Territory or Do Things Within Your Limits Rule” in the Ghanaian society is this: In speaking to an audience, when a man speaks at a low tone possibly because that is the limit of his biological endowment, or his voice is not loud enough for them to hear, he is asked to “speak like a man” where it is meant that he should speak with courage and some sense of authority. By such an example, the quality of courage or authority is directly mapped on to masculinity, and a man who cannot speak in this manner or is not endowed biologically to speak this way is considered as “not man enough” sometimes being described as speaking like a woman, and tagged as “effeminate-man” (obaaberima). In the same vein, when a woman speaks in this manner that a man is encouraged to speak, she is admonished to “speak like a woman” presupposing that a woman does not, cannot and should not speak like that and one who does so in spite of these admonishments is made to feel bad for exhibiting such courage and authority in speech, and is sometimes tagged as a “masculine-woman” (obaadenden) which when used is in a derogatory sense.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that even though a lot of change has taken place in society and there are changing roles in the family structure such that

men are not typically the breadwinners all the time, and women are no longer forced to stay behind, there is still the silent rule “do it like a woman” that hangs over the head of women. There are a lot of adjustments in professional circles which allows women to get into professions that are thought of as traditional male territory and were hitherto the sole preserve of men, and women are given more dynamic roles in society, but the construct of “woman” or “female” is still tainted with the notions of fragility, emotionality, dependence (the need for a man), and others which are still strongly though implicitly portrayed in our advertisements. To this end, even though we hear slogans like “This Girl Can” “She Can Do It”, and many others of their kind, all in the bid to empower women, there is still that unspoken rule in the background that says “*Woman, you can do all that, but you have a limit! Be mindful of that!*” and this tells us how much work there still is to be done going forward. We all have to decisively work hard to cut the silent strings attached to the stereotypical image of both man and woman in society; where the stereotype of man “+superior +strength +final authority”; and woman is equal to “+second-place -strength+ too emotional”, and be more flexible and less judgmental in terms of what each of the sexes can or cannot do, because anyone can be whoever or whatever they want to be, not by their sex, but because we all are inherently endowed with whatever it takes to be all that we can be. It is up to us to work hard to break the barriers that stand in the way and level the playing ground for all; both females and males, so that no one is limited by virtue of their sex at birth.

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DEPARTURE FROM GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES IN ADVERTISEMENTS; A REALITY OR FALLACY?

Mr. Maxwell Beganim,

Master of Education (M.Ed)

*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana, West
Africa*

Ms. Paulina Terkper,

M.Phil English

University of Education, Winneba- Ghana, West Africa

Introduction:

Advertisement is one of the major channels through which businesses reach their customers. Advertisements affect our daily lives by their influence on our perceptions about goods and services, consumer behaviour, and brand loyalty, whether consciously and unconsciously. To some extent, they play a major role in shaping society. Scholars have argued from various standpoints on whether advertisements are a reflection of what a society is inherently like or if society adopts what is portrayed in the media. This researcher sides with the school of thought which posits that “discourse and action have a dialectical relationship: Discourse is a form of social action as well as a tool for social action, and as discourse shapes action, action shapes discourse.” (Norris & Jones, 2005)

In recent years, a great deal of socio-cultural change has taken place in society, especially with regards to gender roles. More women can confidently pursue careers of their choice and there are changing roles in the family structure. Coupled with the above, there is more support and funding for women in almost all academic fields, and there are improved attitudes towards sex-role stereotypes. All these are attempts to bridge the gap between women and men in professional circles. The question however is, has the representation of women and men in advertisements

changed along with these other visible changes over time so that they are both at par? Or does it still conform to the traditional notions about men and women and their role in society? The traditional stereotype of women dictated how society perceived them, what they could do and not do, and how they were treated. Women were regarded as second place to men who were treated as superior and powerful. This paper presents an attempt to study the influence of advertisements on gender stereotyping in the Ghanaian media. Is there a discrepancy in what is said by society and what is actually portrayed?

Gender Role Stereotypes in Patriarchal Societies

In most African countries, society is patriarchal, and the case is no different in Ghana. In patriarchal societies, stereotypical gender roles have been part of the culture and are deeply ingrained in the way society is structured, and in social attitudes towards the two sexes. It is an obvious fact that advertisements play a very crucial role in reinforcing these stereotypical gender roles. Studying the trend in advertisements over some time reveals sketches of what an ideal woman or man should be like or not be like. In the adverts, the picture of an ideal woman that is created is of one who is soft, has weak will power, and whose daily actions is in the long run for the attention and approval of her man or men in the society. It is frowned upon for a woman to exhibit strong will power and decisiveness or to use power that she has been invested with in the same manner that a man would. Even if women do have or are invested with such qualities, it is expected of them to tone down in using such abilities and to use them with a touch of femininity that is typical of the stereotypical woman. When women possess or are given such qualities in advertisements, it is not well perceived. This notion is highlighted by Adichie, (2015). She states “We spend too much time teaching girls to worry about what boys think of them...We spend too much time telling girls that they cannot be angry or aggressive or tough...” In Ghana, women who are perceived as being strong-willed are referred to as “Obaa berima” which means “woman-man” and this creates a negative impression. The connotation this reference comes with is semantically extended and creates a picture of a woman trying to forcefully be a man; “something she cannot be.” This makes most women shy away from such qualities while others do not want to associate with them. An example is in Adichie’s *We Should All Be Feminists*, where she narrates the story of her American friend who felt slighted by her boss, who had ignored her comments and then praised something similar when it came from a man. This friend had wanted to speak up, to challenge her boss, but she didn’t. According to Adichie, her friend did not want to speak up because she didn’t want to seem aggressive. The striking fact which holds for a lot of African societies is that a lot of girls have been raised to believe that being likeable is very important and that this likeable trait is a specific thing which does not include showing anger or being aggressive or disagreeing too loudly, so, most

women stifle their emotions just to appear feminine and likeable.

Whereas women are sketched as vulnerable with fragile bodies that are objects of sexual pleasure to men, men are invested with values of masculinity such as authority, high muscular strength, and tenacity of purpose. A popular Ghanaian saying is “)b3ma nsu” in the Akan language translated as “A man does not cry”. Seemingly simple on the surface, this phrase is a complete message on its own that conveys the information that a man cannot afford to show any signs of weakness no matter how strained they are physically or emotionally. To the male child, this is a warning to never admit weakness even when it is obvious and glaring, and for one to qualify to be called a man, he must never admit weakness or give the slightest hint of it. This subtly projects men as superior and by default presupposes that a woman cannot have such tenacity as is expected of a man, thus, is allowed to cry, i.e., show signs of weakness. “Crying” here is used symbolically as a sign of weakness and is associated with women. It is on this basis that men who show the slightest sign of weakness are referred to as women. It is very demeaning in the Ghanaian society for a man to be referred to as a “woman” as it goes to suggest that he cannot hold his own against other men. Such men are regarded as a disgrace to manhood and are sometimes described as “Kojo basia” transliterated as “man-woman”. In effect, this describes a man who is male biologically, but female in his actions”. This is another clear example of men being portrayed as superior to “inferior” woman. Chinua Achebe (1958: 45-46) gives a classic example of this in an instance from his story *Things Fall Apart*. “Only a week ago, a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting ...without looking at the man, Okonkwo said: this meeting is for men. The man who had contradicted him had no titles and that was why he had called him a woman”. The discussion above gives a clear picture of the stereotype of an ideal man and woman in patriarchal societies and sets the background for the discussion in the next section.

The Influence of Advertisements in Reinforcing Gender Role Stereotypes

Though the media talks of more support for women and embark on several initiatives and projects towards this cause, the real actions of the various stakeholders as per the information contained in advertisements does not conform to their words. There is great discrepancy. Women are still subtly portrayed in the traditional stereotypical light. The message conveyed to women in a sense is “You can be strong and dynamic, but with a touch of femininity” or “You’re allowed to break barriers and get into traditional male territory, but do it like a woman.”

Various scholars define advertising differently. According to Stanton (2002) “Advertising consists of all activities involved in presenting to a group a non-personal, oral or visual, openly sponsored identified message regarding a product, service, or idea.” Advertisement is undisputedly a dominant element of market promotion. In the view of Kotler (2011) “Advertising is any paid form of non-

personal presentation and promotion of goods, services, or ideas by an identified sponsor.” Bovee adds to the discourse by defining advertising as “the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media”. (Bovee, 1992, p. 7). These definitions clearly reveal the nature of advertisement. There is always an identified sponsor; it is presented to a particular group, which means there is a target audience; and the goal is usually to induce people to buy.

Forty advertisements of goods and services in the Ghanaian electronic media were sampled for this study and the analysis of the content of these advertisements reveal a trend. Women are still portrayed in the traditional role of homemaker, wife, trophy, housemaid, and object of sexual appeal to men. Most of the advertisements are of home supply products and personal effects. One that stands out is a deodorant advert in which a bevy of half-naked ladies are lined up on a beach where a group of men keep staring and enjoying the fragrance so sheepishly that they trip and fall in the pool. The ladies are conscious that the men are staring, and giggle childishly showing they enjoy the attention. The question, however, is what message is this ad sending out? It is to make the lady appealing to a man, and this is a clear case of objectification of women. Women are portrayed in several similar adverts as objects of sexual appeal or gratification for men. Female models are increasingly shown in advertisements to sell products that are not directly related to them, and by that sponsors also send out the message that the physical appearance of these models is the ideal for women and is what a contemporary lady should aspire to, if she wants men to find her attractive.

To add to it, the Ghanaian media is fraught with advertisements of local gins and pills that are intended to give men strong sexual stamina. One thing worth noting in these advertisements is that there are often more women than men, and the role women play is of one who is there to encourage the man to take more of the said gin or pill or to praise a man who uses the gin/pill for satisfying her sexually. This brings to the fore the question, why should it be a woman encouraging the man to use the product? The answer is obviously the hidden message that the woman is the beneficiary of the sexual stamina of the man, thus, the role of encourager being played in the ad is for her sexual benefit in the long run.

Again, in almost all non-religious music videos, it is found that half-naked women in skimpy dresses that expose sensitive parts of their body are never missing. This has become a form of requirement as it is perceived that songs won't sell if that element of sexual appeal created by women in various sensual positions is absent. This is another case of sexually objectifying women. Indeed, sex as an emotion has been successfully employed by advertisers in promoting all sorts of products from personal effects to cars, machinery, etc.

In other types of advertisements that have to deal with home products such as detergents and soaps, women are portrayed in the traditional role of house makers

where they serve as the ones responsible for washing. Even if men are found in such adverts, they only serve as marketers of the products or men of the house that women go to for approval. In food adverts, women are portrayed as the ones responsible for preparing meals. In such ads, the woman prepares a meal using the product being advertised, and her husband or mother-in-law approves the quality of the product by tasting the meal. A woman is mostly seen looking on anxiously for the reaction of either of these two figures after they taste the meal and give their opinion, which in a way is a form of verdict on her cooking skills. There are a few adverts where a man cooks, and in such ads, that mere act of cooking done by a male is treated as a very high achievement by a female figure who is put there to taste the meal and act very highly impressed. The obvious message is that the place of the woman is in the kitchen and that a man who assumes this role is doing his wife or the women in his life a favour and they should be proud of him for that. The fact that the gender of the one who prepares a meal in ads is such a big deal is a form of stereotyping. Again, a woman having to wait for the opinion of her husband or mother-in-law sends the message that the deciding power does not lie with a woman, but with a man, which suggests the superiority of the male over the female.

In other types of adverts like energy drink adverts, the lead characters are often males. Here, sponsors of such adverts want to communicate that taking their product boosts energy levels and gives high muscular strength, which men are easily associated with. This explains why men are the main actors in such adverts even though women are present. These adverts favour men as superior and they are given authoritative roles. Women, on the other hand, are sparingly given such roles but easily get picked to portray non-working roles as washer, the wife, baby mama, cooker, eye candy etc. in adverts.

Conclusion

To this end, it can be concluded that gender stereotyping is still visibly present in the advertising industry in Ghana, and both males and females are portrayed in the traditional roles assigned them by society. While women are sketched as fragile, vulnerable and objects of sexual appeal to the opposite sex, men are portrayed as the bosses and decisive authorities in the home and professional circles. "Although there is a difference in the product categories advertised by women, they are still portrayed more in traditional and stereotyped roles" (Moorthi et al, 2014). The notion that there are improved attitudes towards gender role stereotyping, and that people react negatively to this can be described as "lip service." The real sketches of women and men in adverts still conform to the stereotypical ones, and conscious efforts have to be made in deconstructing the old stereotypical image to reconstruct a better image.

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STEREOTYPING WOMEN IN ADVERTISEMENT

Dr. Koffi ABOTCHI,

Faculty of English Literature,

Université de Lomé, Togo, West Africa

INTRODUCTION

In a world of fast advancing technology, and with the bounties of the fourth industrial revolution, advertisements play a major role in our modern life. Designed to entice our consuming ability and sometimes explain the best ways of using some of the products, advertisement has gone so far as to make use of the gender roles and reinforce the debasing image of women in a society prone to feminist values. As a matter of fact, women have been stereotyped in the media for centuries. Whether in literature or mass-media, women have always given a debasing role.

1. How has advertisement evolved today?

Advertisement is one of the greatest means of communication today. It is intended to lure customers to a product or service available. In today's world, advertisement has occupied an important place in the media as it is present in all media, including the radio, television, internet and hard copy posters including in the social media. The target is the customers: "Advertisement is a powerful tool to favorably affect the opinion of the customers (Parul Nagi, 2014: 75)." As a matter of fact, advertisement has become a means to influence the opinion of people, enticing them to products they do not necessarily plan to buy. Not only do advertisement influence the opinion of customers, it also influences the opinion of society as a whole: "Increasingly, advertisement is used to advocate a wide variety of ideas (Samson Sambe, 2013: 49)." This often leads to representation of men and women in a way that reinforces gender roles and stereotypes.

2. Gender roles and stereotypes

A gender role is "a set of social and behavioral norms that are generally considered appropriate for either a man or a woman in a social or interpersonal

relationship.”¹ For McBride-Stetson, “Gender roles refer to expectations or prescriptions about behavior and characteristics of men and women, especially in relation to, or comparison with, each other.”² The excerpt holds that the gender roles are “expectations or prescriptions” concerning how an individual should behave in society. Human beings learn, through education, how to act in a particular way, right from their childhood. Gender roles determine the roles that either of the two sexes has to play in order to be called man or woman. As a matter of fact, one is not a man because one is born with male genitals; neither is one a woman because one is born with female genitals. Our cultures, through the education we receive from them, determine the role we are supposed to play in order to be considered male or female.

Gender roles can influence all kinds of behaviors, such as choice of clothing, work, and personal relationships. It is present in almost all the aspects of social life. Traditional gender roles determine the roles that each person should play according to her or his gender. Therefore, if you are born a man, you are supposed to be strong and should not show any sign of weakness. Right from childhood, boys are trained to be that. They are constantly reminded that a man should be strong and behave accordingly.

In the same vein, men are considered capable of doing hard work and supposed to go out and look for professional work. Thus, in traditional societies, men are the breadwinners. They are the providers of food for their wives, children, and relatives.

Gender Stereotypes

A stereotype is a belief or idea of what a particular type of person or thing is like. For June Chisholm and Beverly Greene, these “stereotypes are learned early (2008: 58)” and these gender stereotypes are generally biased against women. They are often unfair or untrue (Michael Mayor, 2012).

Paula Niedenthal summarizes gender stereotypes in this way:

Women are more emotionally expressive. Women are more emotionally responsive. Women are more empathetic.

Women are more sensitive to others’ feelings. Women are more obsessed with having children.

Women express their feelings without constraint, except for the emotion of anger.

Women pay more attention to body language.

¹ World Health Organization, “What do we Mean by ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’?” Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender>. Consulted on March 19, 2013.

² McBride-Stetson, op. cit., 10.

Women judge emotions from nonverbal communication better than men do.

Women express more love, fear, and sadness. Women laugh, gaze, and smile more.

Women anticipate negative consequences for expressing anger and aggression.

Men are more obsessed with sex.

Men are overwhelmed by women's expressions of emotion. Men express more anger.

Men are stoic.

Men show emotion to communicate dominance.³

A critical analysis of these reveals that we are told to believe and practice all these things since our early childhood. Because the parents have engraved in their minds these stereotypes, they always try to make children behave accordingly, making them believe that they are natural. These fixed ideas we have about the genders determine our behavior towards people in society. These stereotypes often influence the roles men and women are given both in fiction and in the media.

3. The Media and Women's Image

In the media, the gender stereotypes take a more dramatic turn. The term *prostitutot* has been coined to refer to the horrible phenomenon which is "perpetrated on young girls and teenagers who are brainwashed by the media, fashion, and toy industries to think of themselves as sex objects and to dress in scanty, provocative clothing, like a prostitute (Chisholm and Greene, 2008: 58)." The media, as well as the fashion industry, brainwash young girls, teaching them that they have to appear as "sex objects," dressed in "scanty, provocative clothing." Young girls are therefore trained to look like "prostitutes," people who have nothing to do with their life than to sell their bodies and trade them for money and pleasure.

Still abounding in this direction, June and Beverly paint this picture of the damage being done:

Bratz dolls illustrate this stereotype, which when internalized by youth, both males and females, contributes to a young girl or adolescent's lower self-esteem and the distorted, damaging image of what it means to be male vis-a-vis female. The girl Bratz doll uses lots of makeup (message: one's natural state is ugly), wears less clothing, and shows plenty of skin. The style of dress is sexually provocative, like a prostitute, suggesting that a girl must see herself as a sex object or sex toy to be

³ Paula Niedenthal et al., "Gender Roles," retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role. Consulted on March 19, 2013.

accepted and liked. In contrast, the boy Bratz doll is well dressed and often has books or a backpack, showing that he is smart and ambitious (Chisholm and Greene, 2008: 58).

This picture clearly shows a tradition that has always been perpetuated in our society: the attribution of roles in society. While young boys are trained to be “smart and ambitious,” young girls are made to believe that to “be accepted and liked,” they must consider themselves a “sex object or sex toy.” This seems to line up with a tradition that has been perpetuated in the media for ages: “The media is generally charged with depicting women as ‘sex objects’ that can grab attention and interest of viewers (Parul Nagi, 2014: 75).” As a matter of fact, people still view women as objects, good only for attracting attention. This testifies to fact that women have been usually manipulated and relegated to the position of a second-class citizen. And the media is playing a big role in reinforcing that view.

Equally, Hazel Gordon concluded in his analysis that “the majority of women used in adverts for products aimed at men were overly sexualized (2017: 50).” Although the advertisements are jeered toward male audience and viewers, these advertisers just focus on “using sexualised images of women to market to men, by sarcastically downplaying the nature of the image. The advert describes the literal context of their image, leaving the sexually suggestive nature of it to be discovered by the consumer.”

According to Nerisa Pillay, women, in the media are represented as follow: “Female characters appeared predominantly in advertisements promoting cleaning (27%), drugs / medicine (23%), appliances (17%), personal care and beauty for women (7%), and ICT / Telecommunications (7%) products (2008: 50).” While men are usually depicted in the media as entrepreneurs, industrious and competitive, women are given roles that promote minor jobs such as the promotion of cleaning, drugs, appliances, personal care and beauty for women, and telecommunications products. All these perpetuate the long-held belief about women’s inferiority, thus, leading the abuse of the rights of women.

CONCLUSION:

Due to the long-held belief according to which women are of the weaker sex and can play only second-class roles in society, the media has been serving the role of reinforcing the existing stereotypes. These stereotypes paint women as servants and objects, good only for attracting attention and arousing men’s feeling. However, in spite of this sad reality of women’s portrayal in the media, many voices are being raised all over the world to condemn such attitudes, and actions are being taken to put an end to them. Although changes are being brought over the past years on the roles given to female actors in the advertisements, a lot remains to be done to achieve justice for women and society as a whole. Just like Mubashir Majid

Baba aptly points it out (2012: 43), people working in the advertisement industry must “strategize” and “evaluate” the content of their pictures and videos on society before releasing them.

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SECURING THE INSECURITIES: THE PORTRAYAL OF SELF-OBSESSED BEAUTY IN BANGLADESHI ADVERTISEMENT

Maliha Tabassum,

Lecturer Bangladesh University of Professionals &

Saiyeed Shahjada Al Kareem,

Department of Television, Film and Photography, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Introduction:

There is a popular saying, 'Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder'. It means beauty is subjective, what one finds beautiful maybe another does not. Considering it true, there should not be any 'standard' of beauty, especially for women. But, unfortunately, expectation is different from reality. Media industries are creating 'set standards' of beauty through their promotional media advertisements where the beauty is all about photoshop and computer enhanced models. Making models walk, talk and live beauties inside the advertisement, they built some impossible standards of perfections. According to a report by YWCA USA, *Beauty at Any Cost*, cosmetic industries made more than \$7 billion by selling only beauty products. Their profit margin should not be the concern; indeed, business survives through profits. Problem arises when the viewers especially the women perceive these as ideal types and try to achieve something that is unachievable and thus hampering themselves consciously or unconsciously.

The portrayal of women in business advertisement has always been in concern for researchers since early 80's (Matlin, 1987; Ferrante, Haynes, & Kingsley, 1988). In one chapter of the book *Feminist perspectives on eating disorders* (1994) writer Jean Kilbourne talked about the impact of the ideal images. The idealism hits so hard that women start to think they are ugly, fat, hairy, they have pimples, vaginal odor, their hairs are dry, they don't have curves and thus advertisements make them feel anxious, insecure and depressed about themselves (p. 365). This study focuses on the contents of some selective and popular television advertisement and tries to

find out their nature of portraying self-obsessed beauties.

Literature Review:

Many studies have taken Women and their insecurities in consideration. Herper and Tiggermann (2008) blamed media for making consumers especially women insecure about themselves. In an experimental study on 90 undergraduate Australian women, they found most of them feel anxious and depressed about their own body when they see mediated body image in magazine advertisements.

The obsession of having fair skin tone is always prevalent among Asia. Study (Krishen, LaTour, & Alishah, 2014) found this obsession is more visible among women than men as women consider themselves secure and acceptable in society with fairer skin tone. Sin and Yau thinks (2004) this obsession is the creation of patriarchal society where orientation of women is inconsistent although having greater roles in modern society.

Some studies discussed about long term effect and perceptions made by these sorts of advertisements on women (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). Frith, Ping and Hong (2005) found significant cross-cultural differences in construction of beauty in magazine advertisement. US beauty is all about 'Perfect Body' and 'Clothing' whereas Taiwanese beauty is inclined to 'Pretty Face'. This bodily obsession is also found among USA women by Hill and Hanson back in the year of 1994.

On the other hand, Samandar (2016) found no significant impact of media advertisements on women's self-objectification and the goal to achieve thin-ideal type. Rather he found peer pressure such as family and friends more influential in creating insecurities among women about their appearance, body shape and imperfections.

Reviewing all existing literatures, it can be said that media advertisements are being blamed to portray beauty standards that are impossible to achieve. Even Samandar who finds advertisements less responsible to create insecurities tagged all beauty commercials as "Deceptive advertisements". Important thing is, most of the researchers showed interest on the impacts these advertisements create rather than dissecting the contents. This study is unique as it focuses on content analysis especially the audio-visual analysis of advertisements. It is also unique in the context of Bangladesh and also in its sampling of taking only television advertisement as most of the prior researches were done on magazine advertisements.

Research objective:

The main objective of this research is to conduct an audio-visual analysis on three popular advertisements of women products to find out the presence of any

such elements which might cause or increase insecurities among women about themselves.

Theoretical Framework Objectification Theory

In 1997, Barbara L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts conceptualized “Objectification Theory” in their seminal essay “*Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women’s Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks*”. According to them, when objectification occurs, women are treated as bodies (p. 175). They argued that objectification treatment persuades women to take a third person view of the self, (p. 177) they become concerned about how others think about them and act according to that. It can lead women to feel shame, provoke anxiety about their physical appearance and safety, reduce women’s quality of life and can make less use of their own inner physical experiences about how they feel. (p. 181-185)

Methodology and Sampling:

This study has followed the method of visual analysis. Visual analysis, as the name describes, analysis of the visual representation of arts (Business dictionary, 2018). It is the observation of external features which lead to a general estimation about the contents. Here, advertisements of three female product, fairness cream, shaving cream and body cream have been analyzed by separating into two parts-audio and visuals. These three advertisements were taken by a random selection technique and analyzed to elaborate the structure, color and motifs of these advertisements on screen.

Visual Analysis of three advertisements:

Advertisement 1:

Topic of Concern: Shade of face (Fair and Lovely Advanced Multivitamin)
Link: <https://youtu.be/YvBT7M82uXE>

Audio

Language (Script)

Wherever you go, sun doesn’t spare you. Even after returning home, the effect of sunburn stays with you. Result, your half face is shaded and half face is something other. Fair and Lovely Advanced Multivitamin, keeps your skin away from dullness and gives you excellent glow. Say Bye to dullness, hi to excellent glow.

Music

When the woman feels worried about her face the music sounds gloomy and

tensed emphasizing woman's feeling. But when it comes praising the cream the music changes from tension creating to inspirational, motivating, victorious.

Visual (Researcher's observation)

- The woman is always annoyed with the sunlight and worried about her face color. Getting out from home or restaurant, getting down from bus and while entering home, everywhere she is concerned about how she looks, looks at the mirror even just after returning home.
- The woman wears hijab, which makes half face covered, maybe their target audience is the hijab wearing population. Porimoni (the narrator) constantly stays beside her, she is a representative of a cosmetic brand that aims to show the woman's flaws.
- The woman wears hijab but Porimoni does not, indicating the audience that she is out of fear as she uses the cream. At last the woman looks at the mirror again and finds her face glowing which makes herself confident and she gives a great smile.
- Comment section is turned off in YouTube.
- Graphics are used in a way to create an impression that the cream has great power to make skin glowing. Showing Porimoni's face transforming into relatively whiter shade is nothing but absolute graphics work.

Advertisement 2:

Topic of Concern: Body should be equally whiter to face (Vaseline Healthy White Lighting Lotion) Link: <https://youtu.be/iMDYascnjY>

Audio

Language (Script)

You are very busy. In sunny morning or in glittering evening, nothing goes unnoticed to you. But only neglected is your own skin. In everyday sunlight, skin loses its brightness and softness. Vaseline healthy white helps to repair and brighten your skin and protects from sun. Get repaired and bright skin in only two weeks. Vaseline's that skin repairing strength.

Music

Music stops its normal beat when the girl finds her body skin has lost fairness. Moreover, the music sound more joyful and inspirational when she takes off her jacket.

Visual (Researcher's observation)

- Starts with a working woman, looking at her car's side view mirror. She is also

looking at mirror in the middle of work. As if, she is always concerned about how she looks.

- Gets annoyed when sun rays fall on her, which seems quite weird for an active working woman who works outside to behave such. After two weeks she takes off her jacket, looks very happy and confident. Not because she inaugurated her own studio but she has fairer body complexion.
- Graphics makes the skin of the woman fairer in three phases.

Advertisement 3:

Topic of Concern: Unwanted hair (Veet Bangladesh) Link: <https://youtu.be/ejnnjThoybs>

Audio

Language (Script)

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! You are not a boy, and that's not a toy. So why this razor? Why?? Why? Wha..wha..why? You see you are stable; it just kills the bubble. Cause your hair is so poky, so poky, poky, poky. Don't shave it, just VEET it. Just apply it, leave it and rinse it. So, girls, don't shave it, just VEET it. Say no to razors. Don't shave it.

Music

- Music sounds same all the time but changes a bit when the VEET is shown with graphics in the end, which emphasizes the necessity of the cream.
- All the dialogues are uttered as if it was a poem (lyrical) or a song. The whole thing is a conversation but not real-life one. As if girls there are in a state where everything seems like a dream (resembles the attire of the cast as a doll).

Visual (Researcher's observation)

- Everything is pink, as girls seem to like pink.
- Shraddha Kapoor (Lead Cast) is reading a book named 'OOH LALA!' which is a book by Jamie Callan about 'French Women's Secrets to Feeling Beautiful Every Day'.
- Shraddha is dressed up like a barbie doll, symbolizing how a woman should look like.
- The other girl is shouting while using a razor to wipe her leg's hair as shaving is not for girls.
- The other girl is feeling anxious while Shraddha Kapoor intensifying it by saying that her hair is poky, indicating hair in legs is awful, unwanted.

- She holds her a cactus, which resembles poky hair (0.17 sec)
- The background performers are holding a mustache cut piece over their mouth. They are the representative of male folk. When Shraddha is saying don't shave it, they are also nodding their head as if shaving is only for men.
- Graphics are used to create a bubble which bursts when it touches the girl's poky hair.

This is an Indian act, dubbed in Bengali. It portrays same cultural orientation and circumstances of two countries that Unilever did not bother to make a separate advertisement for Bangladesh.

Discussion and Conclusion:

We can relate all three advertisement with the self-objectification framework of third person's view of self. In all the three advertises girls are always worried about their looks.

In the first one (Fair & Lovely), a hijab wearing woman is always annoyed with the sun when she goes out. She finds her face dark in the uncovered portion and whiter in the covered portion. The visuals make audience feel that if they have the same problem as her, they should be bothered about it and fix it sooner. It also creates a feeling of shame which is behind the anxiety.

In the second one (Vaseline), the working women, concentrates more on her appearance than work by looking at the mirror many times. It goes with what Fredrick and Roberts (1997) stated on the objectification of the female body that anxiety may reduce their quality of life (184). She looks annoyed with the sunlight, unlike an active working woman who works outside. And finally, in the day of the inauguration of her studio, she puts off her jacket and the viewers find her uncovered body parts glowing. She has nothing to fear about as she is judging herself from a third party's point of view. She has now a super shining body and that is the source of her confidence.

Finally, in the third one (VEET), Shraddha (lead actress) seems the most beautiful woman wanted by man. Here, women's most demanding look is symbolically portrayed by the book, by the attire and by the dialogues. The word 'poky' is used several times, uttered in a way to indicate that having hair is quite shameful and it is high time for women consumers to use VEET and get rid of unwanted hairs on hands and legs.

So, the language, music and graphics in all the three advertisements support the key messages what the advertises were meant to deliver, women should secure all their insecurities to look good in third person's eye. Music keeps the rhythm and graphics emphasizes on how the products are capable of giving one longing face or skin.

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AUTISM IN WOMEN IN THE ENTERPRISE MEDIA INDUSTRY

Veronica Aparicio Macovei Clark

University of Missouri- Kansas City (United States of America)

Introduction:

Autism in Women in the Enterprise Media Industry

Let's start at the beginning. Autism is a mental disorder that can usually occur in early childhood, but sometimes can be later detected in adults. Autism will happen the rest of a person's life and can be manageable for some people with either medical profession diagnosis and treatment plans or can be treated in other various strategies that don't always need medication. Psychologist, Psychiatry, or doctors see the signs a person is Autistic by developmental disabilities or delays in social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. Autism is defined with certain various behaviors and is a "spectrum condition" that affects people(s) differently and to varying degrees. Now that you know about Autism I am going to go more in depth with my article.

There are many stereotypes about Autism that are not true. Some people believe that because a person has autism, they are not able to do anything and are "stupid." Others believe that a person is Autism because they were cursed, or the devil got them and this is what the person deserves. Side note, I was at the Dollar Tree store and a kind stranger was having their teenage daughter that had Autism and was embarrassed because people were looking at her because she was not able to control her teenage daughter from having behaviors "tantrum." I then jumped into action because I am experienced in this field and helped the stranger calm her teenage daughter. The best part is that the stranger was Muslim and I do not care what a person's background is because I am devoted to helping others that need help and to help educate the person and solve the problem(s.) Back to the article, In India, the stereotype that people have said about women that sometimes would blame the parent(s) for having their child being autistic. Also does not help much when

a “doctor could also blame the parent” (s) in the article *The discovery of autism: Indian parents’ experiences of caring for their child with an autism spectrum disorder*. Meanwhile, Autism is fairly new in India or other 3rd world countries. Other countries I focused is Romanian and The United States of America. In Romania, Autism is very common and the knowledge of learning more about the disorder has become more studied at the end of the 20th Century in the late 1980s and 1990s. Romanians would see that children or especially women/girls would have more issues in communication more than the other effects of having Autism. In Romania girls would be sent to mental institutions and be hidden from society due to not being “normal.” In America, autism is becoming more and more known and is being treated much earlier and the treatment can be beneficial for parents that are dealing with an autistic child. In general, women are less likely to develop Autism than compared to men. Alongside, from different cultures and norms of the stereotyping of Autism can change over time. Next, we will explain how women that Autistic are able to work in the “real society” in the Enterprise Media Industry with that focus field.

Women can work in the “real society” in the Enterprise Media Industry. There are so many careers and options for women can do in this industry. Just because a woman is Autistic in this field does not mean they are not able to succeed in the field. A little information “investigated behavioral difference in autistic males and females and found that females reported more lifetime sensory symptoms and fewer socio-communication difficulties than males. Furthermore, it has been suggested that compared to autistic males, autistic females are more able to demonstrate reciprocal conversation and are more motivated to initiate friendships (Lai et al. 2015)” from the article, *A Qualitative Exploration of the Female Experience of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*. That is the quick difference for women that are more able to succeed in the industry. An example article by Sophie Wilkinson wrote explains how women that Autistic in the workforce are. In the article author Sophie Wilkinson wrote, she says, “Auticon, a German-founded social enterprise, is looking to change this by going on a recruitment drive for autistic women. The modus operandi of this IT consultancy start-up, which now has offices across Germany as well as in Paris and London, is to directly recruit autistic tech workers and then place them within other companies while supporting them at work.” My second example that a women Sommer explains a study in the United Kingdom. She quoted [In 2017 study done in “] the UK, only 16 percent of those with autism are in full-time employment. “The quality of applications from women is extremely high, and they have amazing technical skills, but perhaps little social skills,” says Sommer. “They fail at the interview process because it’s all about selling yourself, but there’s a huge potential of actual talent that companies are missing out on.” Although some women that are Autistic may not be able to do interviews, but that does not make them incapable to perform excellent in their field.

Here are some perfect examples of women in either television series or movies showing women are succeeding in Enterprising roles with Autism. Some examples

of movies and television shows/ series would be The Big Bang Theory, NCIS, the movie Temple Grandin (2010), and the movie The Other Sister (1999). We all know the character Amy Farrah-Fowler in the Big Bang Theory. As her character demonstrates a spectrum of Autism / Asperger's. Dr. Amy Farrah-Fowler, "The Big Bang Theory", She is a Ph.D. in neuroscience and with a research focus on addiction in primates and invertebrates. Within her character she has difficulty saying her emotions and really wants affection, but has difficulty sharing or accepting. She slowly learns to be more affectionate with her boyfriend Sheldon Cooper. Another example leading is Abby Sciuto from NCIS tv series. Abby Sciuto, from the television series called "NCIS." Her beloved character is a forensic scientist at the Naval Criminal Investigative Service headquarters in Washington D.C., Virginia. With her skillful expertise in ballistics, digital forensics, and DNA analysis she can do the most difficult tasks but do it with such simple ease. She may be able to be the mastermind of technology, but her character does have difficulty learning the ins and outs of verbal communication at times. She also has hyper empathy but occasionally at times she cannot express concern or other emotions. Eventually over time Abby does end up making new friends/ team members because she struggles with understanding people. Temple Grandin (2010), an autistic woman who has become one of the top scientists in the humane livestock handling industry. Although it is not really in the Enterprising, but she does do a lot of mathematics ability to not only know the figurations but also designs the layouts of her new structure of a more humane to slotted animals. She has proven that Autistic women/ people can get their higher education, but even get their doctorate degree. Temple is known for creating her "hug box", which is recognized even to this day. The "Hug Box" was to squeeze an animal, but at times Temple would use her box in a way to relieve stress, but also helped solve a good strategy in helping with autistic children. The last example I will be talking about is from a movie that was done in 1999. The movie is called The Other Sister, Carla Tate, is a young woman, that is a graduated from vocational training school. As she tries for her wanting of independence and wanting to fit in the "real world" or today's society. Later in the movie, Carla Tate decides she wants to go to college. Carla attends Bay Area Polytech college and takes a course in computers. Anyways, Carla ends up doing well in her computer class and finally gets her independence.

Some current studies that are being conducted today is The *Dark Side of Software Development: Job Stress amongst Autistic Software Developers* article. In the article, *The Dark Side of Software Development: Job Stress amongst Autistic Software Developers*, Baron-Cohen and colleagues discuss how artistic employees are more doing into jobs into technology and STEM-related field works. Baron-Cohen says, "Furthermore, technology companies benefit from the unique talents of some autistic employees, such as attention to detail, systematic thinking, high level of focus, comfort with doing repetitive behaviors, and ability to visualize problems [6][9][11]." *Autism and employment: What works*, the authors: Susan M. Hayward, Keith R. McVillyb, Mark A. Stokes explains about Autistic employees in the Workplace

environment. Last study I will discuss is about being Autistic in the workforce industries.

A goal to have a successful business or happy employees to have employment to be good in business. Individuals or employees with autism includes some changes or adaptations of the physical work environment. One way is to accommodate sensory sensitivities. For instance, attention paid to noise levels and artificial lighting. Metaphorically the employer should create sustained intervention targeting inclusive organizational cultures within the specific country or business in a specific country and with a diversity climate may be the key to providing appropriate support for people with autism. One idea, an employing good leaders or management people or team with transformational qualities can help assist individuals with Autism. This may require intervention or other strategies on an individual level. At the end the objective would to help advocate issues of equal rights in the workplace environment.

In the article we have addressed a lot about Women in the Enterprise Media Field Industries and how women can have their ups and downs in this field. Autistic women we have learned that different cultures have their own point of views and stereotypes about women being Autistic. Then you learned about the impacts on how research has improved and will continue to improve for women in this work. This line of work will continue to succeed for everyone and give a chance to women around the world with Autism.

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PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND GENDER STEREOTYPING IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. A PERSPECTIVE FROM ZIMBABWE, SOUTHERN AFRICA

Ms. Monica M. Tonodzai

Social Activist, Zimbabwe, Southern Africa

Media is often described as the communication channels that we use in our everyday life and these include the television, radio, newspapers, films, music and off late this has included new media which includes Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. While media serves purpose of disseminating information, media has often been criticized for its gender bias in that it perpetuates gender stereotypes as well as the objectification of women in images, adverts and music. Zimbabwean music has been noted as an instrument in which gender stereotypes have been perpetuated. As a society rooted in patriarchy, the subjugation of women has often been portrayed and perpetuated in music. This article explores the portrayal of women and gender stereotyping in the music industry in Zimbabwe with a special focus on the gender stereotypes propagated through music and lyrics as well as the objectification of women. It is imperative to note that these stereotypes continue to manifest in the media industry despite the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Beijing Platform and the domestication of laws and policies that govern the media industry which include the National Gender Policy which specify the gaps existing in the industry as well as the need to utilize media as platform to promote gender equality.

International Instruments and Conventions

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1999) and the United Nations Beijing Platform (1995) are some of the international instruments that have noted the gender gaps

in the media industry having stated that “media, communication and information systems can stigmatize, denigrate and reify women and girls, including prompting violence against them, as well as reproducing gender models and stereotypes that discriminate and underestimate them”. In addition to highlighting the need to address gender stereotypes the United Nations Beijing Platform (1995) states that “state parties are expected, among other things, to work on reversal of continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in the media, improve women’s access to media as well as use media to project positive images of women and counter stereotypes and discrimination”. However despite the ratification of these instruments, Zimbabwean secular music continue to objectify and produce stereotypes that perpetuate women’s abuse and how they are portrayed in society. The secular genre includes the traditional “sungura” music and the contemporary music which includes the urban grooves and the Zimbabwean dancehall which has become so popular among the youths. It is noted that in all these genres of music, women continue to be stigmatized and objectified as “prey” for men to conquer, with some lyrical content denigrating and using vulgar language to portray women as sexual objects existing for the benefit of men in society.

Music can be described as the channel in which societies articulate values, norms and culture (Nett (1990) while Ntarangwi (1999) argues that “musical practice, including the composition of songs and accompanying tunes, rehearsals, performance, recording and consumption ... is a social-cultural affair that is couched in the values, moral structures, aesthetics and other nuances of the attendant culture”. It is key to note that musical practice and composition of songs is interlinked to the socio-cultural realities in society and continues to be a reflection of what the society perceives, behaves and how men and women co-exist. Ndlovhu (2019) states that “music contributes to people’s lives in many ways which include acting as a socializing tool, mentor society and shape the interpretation of reality by society”. People listen to music and watch music videos to witness fashion, lifestyles as well as adopt the latest lingo which may be popular at the time. It is therefore key to analyze the lyrical content as well videos of the secular music produced in Zimbabwe and how the philosophies behind the songs are instrumental in the perpetuation of gender roles, stereotypes as well as the sexual objectification of women.

Gender stereotypes in Zimbabwean secular music

According to Mawere et al (2011) “gender stereotypes are socially constructed ideas or beliefs about men and women which are not necessarily true but taken as truth by society. They are maintained, perpetuated and transmitted from generation to generation by social institutions like the family, school, the media, religion and culture”. One can note that stereotypes can skew the coverage towards the populace that benefits from the music. It is because the stereotypes pushed and emphasized through the music objectify women and make them vulnerable in communities.

One can argue how songs like “kudonhedzamusika”¹ and “Dhafukorera”² which focus on praising the voluptuous woman cementing the notion that curvaceous women are more beautiful and more so can satisfy men sexually as compared to women of other figures. Some of the songs further cement oppressive beliefs that society has on certain subjects and an example is drawn from the song “Jatrophas”³ by Dino Mudondowhich implies that what women want in a marriage is sex cementing the preconceived notion in African societies that believe that the sole purpose of marriage is sex with women being married for the purpose of satisfying their husbands. Such archaic stereotypes continue to manifest in society through the use of music and other media platforms. Not only have women been portrayed as objects but this has fuelled and contributed to the rise of sexual harassment as well as gender based violence especially in the African context. It is therefore key to note that music as a media channel continues to play a role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

The role of language in the portrayal of women through music

Language is an instrumental aspect if one is to challenge the portrayal of women and gender stereotyping in the music industry. This is because language cements society’s notions while it also acts as a socializing agent as it is embedded in culture and tradition. Chari (2008) notes that Zimbabwean contemporary genre known as the “urban grooves” has too many times come under attack for its use of crude lyrics which range from vulgarity, verbal irresponsibility, sexism and misogyny. The language used in the music is loaded in that it has connotations on how women are viewed and objectified by society. Popular language prevalent in the songs include “stonyeni”⁴ which means the private areas of a woman, “magate”⁵ referring to the backside of women or “nzenza”⁶ which means a woman of loose morals. The use of such language promotes the commodification of women as they are seen as “objects of adoration, often with unusual beauty” (Chari 2008). Chari (2008) asserts that this “emphasis on the cosmetic features results in sexualisation of women where they are presented as “playthings” under the control of men or simply as sex objects.” Sexualisation of women in this case entails accentuation of a woman’s looks and body parts by referring to them in language that is loaded with meaning. The choice of words and the lingo used in these secular songs are deeply entrenched in patriarchy to which contemporary music in Zimbabwe is rife with vulgar, imagery of sex and the violation of women as this is seen as a medium

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- ¹ Shona lingo used to mean a woman with big hips and buttocks
 - ² Colloquial word used to mean a curvaceous and voluptuous woman
 - ³ Colloquial word used to mean sex/lovemaking
 - ⁴ Street language used to mean the woman’s private parts
 - ⁵ Colloquial language used to refer to a woman’s buttocks
 - ⁶ Shona word which means a person of loose morals

through which female sexuality is tamed. This taming of women results in the commodification and objectification of women with women being seen as puppets existing quench the sexual appetite of men.

Vambe (2000) notes that some artistes in Zimbabwe consistently depict women as “dangerous” and “loose,” implying that women should be controlled and rendered powerless in both the public and private domain. These lyrics promote patriarchal hegemonic and cultural narratives that transfer power from women to men through the loaded language. Some of the lyrical content gives authority for men to abuse the rights of women through sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, violence and marginalization. The language used is laden to the extent that it objectifies, trivializes or silences women and the more society consumes these lyrics contemptuous attitudes against women are cultivated.

The unchallenged assumptions in the music industry in Zimbabwe

It goes without say that in the music industry in Zimbabwe, there are a lot of unchallenged assumptions that relate to women, their roles, responsibilities as well as their capabilities. This is mostly noted in the lyrical content including the videos that are shown on the Zimbabwean media.

One of the main assumptions is that women should be home makers with child caring responsibilities and ensuring that their husbands and children are taken care of. This has been seen in songs where women are portrayed as objects only fit for the purpose of being married and loved by their partners. Chari (2008) notes that “women have been a staple theme of Zimbabwean popular music as objects of either caricature or adoration from time immemorial. However, in the past lyrics tended to be nuanced in their representation of women.” One can give the examples of ZexManatsa’s song “ChipoChiroorwa” which emphasized that the woman in question must get married whilst she still has “value”. In this song like many others, such underpinning statements perpetuate gender stereotypes that women ought to be married while they are still young and chaste and that their mere existence is for marriage purposes. Such notions cement the unchallenged assumptions existent in the African society where patriarchy has emphasized the subordination of women through marriage and relationships. This representation of women in traditional, less powerful and stereotypical roles trivializes and minimizes the contribution of women in society and this has often been extended and used as justification to minimize their stake in social, economic and political spheres.

Another assumption that has been unchallenged in the music industry is that women are merely sexual objects and this has been seen in music videos where women are used as props scantily dressed while dancing erotically for the pleasure of men. Sasa (2004) states that “women continue to be presented in music videos

as body parts and not individuals. They are breasts, lips, thighs and backsides.” This assumption has deep roots within the patriarchy culture where women went to initiation ceremonies to be taught and learn how to use traditional medicine to ensure that men derive sexual gratification. This was solely meant to please men and boost their chauvinist tendencies and this continues to find its way in the music industry through the lyrics, content and videos used. One can state how most of the female entertainers have become the showstoppers in the entertainment industry owing to their sexually oriented dances. This goes on to show the patriarchal reflection of cultural notions of social space, culture and practice and their impact on how women are viewed and portrayed in society.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is key to note international instruments and protocols have been instrumental in setting the tone needed to curb the stereotyping of women and girls through the various media platforms which include the music industry. However while this article shows that women are still subjugated and discriminated against in the Zimbabwean music industry. While the essay narrowly focused on Zimbabwe, the description and depiction of women highlighted is universal as gender stereotypes are still being perpetuated in the music industry world over. Gender bias and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes continue to manifest in the media industry resulting in gender equality becoming a fallacy therefore the key recommendation is to promote the adoption of gender sensitive policies in all media channels including the music industry to ensure that deep-seated patriarchal systems are dealt with.

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GENDER GAP IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION MAKING: INDIAN CONTEXT

Dr. Naveen B R

Lok Sabha Research Fellow at the Parliament of India

Introduction

Women participation in Indian politics is much appreciated in the recent years. Achieving gender equality, recognizing the link between democracy and the equal participation of men and women in parliaments stands crucial. Almost 50% of the Indian population is not adequately represented in national parliament and state legislative assemblies. Some of the social, economic, cultural and political factors hinder the women participation in political spheres adequately. The need of gender equality in parliaments is stressed at national and international platforms. Some of the countries stand as great examples in women's political representation. Success of women participation in panchayat raj systems in India shows the potential of women representatives in addressing societal and developmental issues. Currently there is a positive trend in recognizing women's right and need in political and decision making systems which has resulted in increased representation of women in various political and decision making spheres. This chapter discusses about the role, need and trends of women participation in political and decision making systems.

Women Political Participation in India and abroad

Empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status by 2030 is one among the 10th goals of SDGs. Almost half of geographical area and population in India is covered by the women, hence the development of the country depends upon the status of both the gender equally. Engaging in civil society, to get elected to government office, vote in elections, serve on boards are the fundamental rights of women that may affect them, their families and their communities. Global gender equality and democratic governance can be achieved

by investing in women's right to political participation.

Women participation in Indian politics is much appreciated in the recent years. Women's political consciousness, decision-making abilities and contesting for elections are essential aspects in political participation instead of just having the right to vote. Women are conferred equal status with men by Indian Constitution since its inception. Indian independence movement has substantial share of women who advocated for independence from British. Although gender equality as constitutional right is the result of independence but political participation by women is been low.

The 17th Lok Sabha comprises 78 women MPs out of 545 MPs and 25 women MPs in Rajya Sabha out of 240 MPs. Overall 103 MPs out of 785 MPs in Indian parliament constituting 13.12% while the global average is 22.4%. India stands at 149th position among 193 countries in 2019 regarding the percentage of elected women representatives in their national parliaments. Women MPs take the share of 14% in the 17th Lok Sabha whereas world average is 24.3% as on January 2019. As on January 2018, out of the total 4,118 MLAs across the country, only 9 per cent were women. Out of the total 4896 MPs/MLAs across the country, only 418 or 9% are women. Around 50% of the Indian population is not represented adequately in political spheres to express their opinions in the decision-making platforms and this lags India behind in achieving SDGs 2030.

According to the report of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, India ranks 148 globally in terms of representation of women in executive government and parliament. According to the report, women in politics 2017, India is at the 13th position out of 18 countries and better than the Asian average of 11%. While Europe surpasses the global average at 25.2%, Sub-saharan Africa has an average representation of 22.6%, Asia at 19% and the Arab states at 18%. The Nordic countries alone have 41.5% average of women MPs. 42 countries in the world have 30% or more women MPs in their Parliament. Nordic countries have large shares of women parliamentarians that is 41.4 per cent in Norway, 43.6 per cent in Sweden, 42 per cent in Finland and 37.4 per cent in Denmark well above the world average of 23.8 per cent. These parliaments stand as a good example of political inclusiveness and society in general.

Causes for inequality

According to IPU (2019), achieving gender equality, recognizing the link between democracy and the equal participation of men and women in parliaments stands crucial. Women's increasing presence in political spheres influence behavior, practices, culture and laws. Martha C. Nussbaum states that "In the larger society, violence and the threat of violence affects many women's ability to participate actively in many forms of social and political relationship, to speak in public, to be

recognized as dignified beings whose worth is equal to that of others". Factors such as domestic responsibilities, prevailing cultural attitudes regarding roles of women in society and lack of family support are among main reasons that prevents women from entering politics (Economic Survey 2018). Further, the lack of confidence and finance are the other major deterring factors for women. Economic Survey, 2018 explicitly mentions that "Recognising the significance of roles of women in decision making process in the society is critical to strengthen women's agencies for building a progressive society with equality of opportunities among all citizens."

Further, the world houses more than a billion youth but the largest number of men and women parliamentarians falls in the range of 51–60 age (IPU, 2014). The largest gap in representation is between men over 45 and women under 45 indicating that younger women are doubly disadvantaged compared to parliamentarians with other demographic profiles (IPU, 2014). The promotion of young women's political participation and presence in decision-making at all levels is not viewed critical yet. According to IPU Secretary-General Martin Chungong, "Equal representation in positions of power is a fundamental precondition for truly effective and accountable democracy and much remains to be done if women are to play on a level field with men".

Only a handful of countries have discussed or approved age-based quotas although "age" and "gender", are viewed as the two most widely accepted categories in need of enhanced political representation (Lisi and Freire, 2012). There are concerns in reserving seats in elected positions for women. Issues such as training to prepare women to take up leadership role, family barrier and influence brings hurdle for women participation even after reserving seats (*Chattopadhyay* and Duflo, 2004). Presently, there are no institutional mechanisms to address this inequality. This status indicates that progress in gender equality in political participation and decision making and power is still firmly in men's hands.

Lessons from best performers

One of the most important provisions that almost all the countries with better women's representation have ensured is to create constitutionally mandated quotas or reservation for women. Rwanda has 30% reservation for women, Nepal has 29% legislated quota for women, Afghanistan has 28%, Pakistan and Bangladesh have 20% seats reserved for women. Some European countries have voluntary political party quotas that encourage and ensure women's participation in the political process. It is inspiring to see some countries with greater number of women MPs in their Parliament. A group of 13 countries can be called as '40 percent group' where women constitute 40% or more of the total seats in their National Parliament. Rwanda tops this group with 63.8% women MPs in the Parliament, Bolivia at 53% and Andorra at 50%. It is interesting to note that most of the countries in this group are from Africa followed by Europe and South America. India can adopt best

practices in the sphere of women's political representation from these countries to bridge the gender inequality gap.

Positive developments in bridging the gap

The feminism wave in 1970s is result of gender inequality issues and stagnant development in India (*Agnihotri and Vina, 1995*). The report of Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1974 had a significant influence in the reemergence of activism towards gender equality. Women's movement had the focus of gender inequality with specific emphasis on issues such as the Uniform Civil Code, Women's Reservation Bill, and sexual violence against women (*Phadke, 2003*). Indian women are significantly involved at the grass roots level of activism.

To address the issue of low participation of women electors, India parliament in 1994 established quotas (reservations) in constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) to reserve 33% of seats in local governments for women (Rai). Further, to address gender inequality in parliament and legislative assemblies, The Women's Reservation Bill (108th amendment) has been introduced in the national parliament to reserve 33% of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats for women (*PRS Legislative Research, 2014*), but the bill is not yet passed by Lok Sabha. The discussion of women's reservations began in the 1920s and continued into the 1930s until a compromise was reached with Britain to allow women in urban areas to vote. Discussion of women's reservations were again introduced in 1974 by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in India, (Raman).

The Government of India has taken various measures such as reservation for women in Parliament, financing women leaders, etc. In India, panchayat raj system is considered as third tier government and grass root level democratic system. Around 253,400 rural local bodies are present at the village level gram as gram panchayats, 6613 intermediary panchayats and 630 district level panchayats in India. About 33% of seats in panchayats are reserved for women to encourage larger political participation of women. In panchayats, around 46.14% that is 13.45 lakh of total elected representatives are women. Women sarpanchs constitutes around 43% of total gram panchayats across the country, exhibiting active leadership of women in local government. This system has increased women political participation from 4-5% to 25-40% and provides opportunity to serve as leaders in local government mainly because of women reservations (*Kaul and Shradha, 2009*). States such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Uttarakhand have increased reservations in panchayats to 50%. The national government has also proposed to raise the level of reservations in panchayats to 50% (Raman). The effect of reservation for women is resulted in increased public goods, including water, sanitation, primary education, public health and roads. Women representatives raise fundamental and welfare issues such as drinking water, road improvements, childcare, maternal health and

violence against women (Economic survey, 2017-18). Being representatives of their communities, women share responsibility of the work assigned which helps to understand the local issues in-depth, and to raise their levels of capability, awareness and skills. This has resulted in development at village level at much faster pace by women representatives and sarpanchs.

The 17th Lok Sabha has 78 women parliamentarians which is the highest ever number with 716 women candidates having contested and getting a success rate of 11%. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. While in 2019, women turnout stands at 68% compared to 68.3% men turnout in the first four phases of polling. Among the status, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Odisha and Gujarat have elected the most number of women parliamentarians. Among the political parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has the most number of women winners (41) followed by the All India Trinamool Congress (9), Congress (7), Yuva Janshiksha Shramika Rythu Congress (4) and Biju Janata Dal (4) in 17th Lok Sabha. Overall, these trends show that women are increasingly participating in the electoral process not just in voting but also contesting the elections.

According to Gilles Verniers, the increased voter turnout among women is influenced by three factors. First, greater access to electoral and developmental information through widely accessible mediums such as mobile phones and internet. Second, political parties have dedicated greater portions of their manifestos to women, which might have encouraged them to cast their vote. Third, the Election Commission has played a vital role in registering women voters over the past decade.

It is evident that elected women representatives have become more articulate, conscious of their power and able to tackle bureaucratic and political hurdles. Women in power bring in greater efficiency and transparency in administration (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). Further, the international association such as UN Women has helped to strengthen the mandate. The national agenda is similar to the UN's commitment to "Leaving No One Behind" and Agenda 2030. SDG agenda 2030 cannot be achieved unless discrimination on the basis of gender comes to an end.

Measures to bridge the gap

The structures, methods and work should respond to the needs and interests of both men and women to ensure gender-sensitive parliament. Empowering women requires capacity building through with quality education, skills development, cognitive abilities for innovation and opportunities in decision making to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels as per 16th goal of SDGs. The need of gender equality in parliaments is stressed

along with civic education programmes that create a culture of equality at an early age at the 12th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament. It also urged that policies and legislation should be analyzed from a gender perspective by both male and female MPs.

The head of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, called for reservation for women in law making bodies across the world. Economic Survey (2018) stressed that for strengthening women agency for building a progressive society with equality of opportunities among all citizens, recognizing the significance of women role in decision making process in the society is critical. These measures may not be sufficient to combat the history of gender inequalities. To address these challenges, the government needs to take initiatives such as improving overall literacy among women, bringing awareness among rural women about their rights, present economic conditions, possible solutions, and their role in addressing these issues etc. Women should be encouraged to speak about the societal issues and possible solutions according to them by the political parties.

Conclusion

Empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of gender by 2030 is one among the 10th goals of SDGs. Empowering women requires capacity building through with quality education, skills development, cognitive abilities for innovation and opportunities in decision making to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels as per 16th goal of SDGs. Although women representation at grass root level democracy that is at Panchayat raj system is better but the same cannot be seen in state legislative assemblies and national parliament. Presently, there are no institutional mechanisms to address this inequality. There is inadequate representation of about half of the Indian population that is women in parliament which requires a serious attention to bring in policy level changes to address this large gender based inequality in political participation and decision making systems. Some of the foreign countries and our own examples provide inspiration to take necessary steps in addressing this inequality. Also the present trend of zeal in women's political participation and level of awareness offers a positive hope of achieving gender equality in political domains. Further, opportunities should be given to especially young women to make use of their potential in addressing societal, cultural and economic issues and building a strong nation.

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PROTESTING LIKE A WOMAN: THE FEMALE FACE OF THE LEBANESE REVOLUTION

Ms. Salma Merhebi,

Ph.D Research Scholar,

University of New South Wales, Australia.

Lebanon was coming late to the Arab Spring that rose up in 2011 in other Arab countries. What has become known as Lebanese October revolution first erupted on Oct. 17, 2019. The protests were the response to tax proposals on gasoline, tobacco and, in particular, tax on WhatsApp calls, which are widely used in Lebanon, due to the high expenses of phone services. Demonstrations were also triggered by long-running shortages in government-provided electricity and water. Moreover, in the week leading up to the protests, the government did not have basic equipment to handle massive forest fires that erupted around the country. Four years ago, this same government failed to resolve a waste crisis that resulted mountains of trash. Consequently, mass protests swept across Lebanon and quickly expanded into ongoing series of civil movements; becoming the most comprehensive anti-government protests the country has seen. Hundreds of thousands of civil activists from different religious and class sectors of society gathered in different locations and blocked important streets around the country. Protesters keep surprising themselves and everybody else with their beautiful messages and agenda:

- A “human chain” showing the unity of the Lebanese people was held on the coastlines from North to the South, encompassing 171 km.
- A candle-light vigil.
- Initiatives to take down political propaganda posters
- Decorating windows and balconies with the Lebanese flag.
- Intellectual and education gatherings
- Students refused to attend their classes in order to protest corruption and unemployment.

- Peaceful sit-in in front of Alfa and Touch buildings (Lebanese telecommunication companies).
- Protesters entered into “Zaituna Bay” demanding an end to seaside property violations.
- Protests were held around major European cities, as well as in North America and Australia, showing solidarity with Lebanon.

As part of their peaceful protest, many protestors expressed their demands using songs, dances and their slogan “all of them means all of them”, as a powerful message to the incompetent political leaders of all parties to go away.

Despite all the peaceful aspects of this revolutionary demonstration, citizens were opposed with VIOLENCE. Tear gas and rubber bullets were fired at protesters in the northern district of “Akkar” by the Lebanese Army trying to reopen the roads and in the center of “Beirut” to disperse protesters. Furthermore, some protestors were beaten with batons by security forces. Dozens of men supporting “Hezbollah” and “Amal” groups, some wearing masks, threw stones and targeted camps of anti-government movement. Other violent situations were witnessed with the former MP “Mosbah al-Ahdab”’s bodyguards who fired on protesters. The “Red Cross” and the “Lebanese civil defence force” said at least 46 people were injured and transported to hospitals. Protesters have called for the resignation of all top officials including the President and Prime Minister and to be replaced with an independent technocratic government. The first victory of the “October Revolution” was announced when the government headed by former Prime Minister “Saad Hariri” resigned after thirteen consecutive days of unprecedented cross-sectarian and leaderless nationwide protests. The peaceful protestors vowed to remain on the streets and their key demands are to end the government corruption and to create a revolutionary change where Lebanese have their right of citizenship, jobs, electricity and freedom. They called for social and economic reforms and stood against stagnant economy, unemployment and endemic corruption in the public sector.

Moreover, they did not forget the rights of all workers living in the country and fought against racism in Lebanese community. Protests have also become a major platform for activism across the country. It encouraged advancing feminism and gender equality to create connections and unity between all groups. Women in the Lebanese revolution have been active at the forefront during movements. Their demands were to have the right to give citizenship to their families, a civil personal status law, and protection from violence. Women have gathered themselves in groups, or organized individuals discussions and marches. On November 3, 2019, a Women’s March took place from “Mathaf” to “Riad Al Solh”, and others in North and South Lebanon particularly, in order to fight the “sectarian and patriarchal regime” that has been victimizing and marginalizing women in Lebanon under archaic and even outrageous laws and rules.

Throughout history, women have critical roles and bold actions during revolutions, whether from supporting, to defending, protesting, nursing, writing and even through arts. In 2011, women shocked the authoritarian regimes when they decided to take action. Women have emerged as key players who sustained the Arab spring. Females sparked protests in several countries and thousands of women of all ages, classes, and religions actively participated in all of them on the frontline. They took part in popular demonstrations that could have posed serious risks to their lives. We cannot forget the scenes of women rallying in the streets and public squares of the Arab world, demanding regime change, an end to repression and the release of loved ones. Women organized their own street patrols and guarded each others when the police became unable to provide security and safety for them.

Through protesting, organising, blogging, hunger striking, rabble-rousing, and, yes, DYING, Arab women were at the Forefront of the Revolution. They continued to support the demonstrations, working as nurses in makeshift hospitals and in ambulances, treating the injured, cooking food and feeding the sit-ins, or else delivering speeches to the crowds and singing songs at the protests. Other women played important roles using technology and social media in particular. They organised and posted events pictures and live videos using facebook, Instagram, Youtube and wrote tweets and blogs against corruption and bribery.

While women joined men against the regime, they ultimately were fighting for women's rights in countries where such rights are suppressed. Many women's rights activists hoped the revolutions would lead to more democracy and thereby different goals unique to their gendered status in society, as we cannot talk about human rights without talking about women's rights. From Syria to Iraq, passing by Libya and Sudan, and many other countries, the revolution had a feminist face:

Bahrain:

In Bahrain, women were among the first wave that descended on Pearl Square in the capital – some with their children – to demand change. They treated the injured in the streets and nursed them in their homes when they were too afraid to go to hospital. The authorities have seized a number of Bahraini women, including at least nine doctors and four nurses. The leader activist “Zainab al-Khawaja” had an influential role in the Bahraini uprising, she wrote tweets reporting abuses and she went on hunger strike and protested against human rights violations carried out by the state. She has been arrested because her calling for democracy and human rights.

Egypt:

When the Arab Spring began in Egypt on January 25, 2011, women were not only parts of the protests, but they were also involved in arranging food deliveries,

blankets and medical help. After the Arab Spring, women are different from what they were before; more attention and public discourse regarding sexual harassment and rape, more female ministers and more stories of successful women.

Libya:

In Libya, women were at the vanguard too, when mothers, sisters, soldiers, journalists and volunteers protested in “Benghazi” and asked for the freedom of their husbands, brothers and sons arrested.

Morocco:

Tens of thousands of men and women took to the streets in 2011-2012, demanding reforms, and female activists risk arrest and even torture, but continue to demand equality and freedom.

Sudan:

The university student “Alaa Salah” is the female icon created by the Arab Spring fighting for the rights of the Sudanese people. She has been famous when a video of her dominated the social media and TVs standing on the roof of a car in “Khartoum” (the Sudanese capital), and singing enthusiastic songs in the protests.

Syria:

Syrian women have been active in the fight against the government through peaceful demonstrations and faced tyranny and extremism. Unfortunately, Syrian females were targeted by terrorist groups, and in numbers, more than 16,000 women have been martyred and hundreds of thousands either harmed or jailed. A large group of Kurdish women found themselves in a position where they have to protect their land and families; they fought the Islamic State alongside the men, and is now building new villages and a new social and political order.

Tunisia:

Tunisia has been able to avoid a civil war and terrorist attacks, and is hailed as the Arab Spring’s biggest success story. Hundreds of Tunisian women doctors, barristers, university professors graduates and mothers were key players in the Tunisian revolution and supported the new democratic government.

Yemen:

In Yemen’s capital, women took part in demonstrations called for their right of freedom. A popular activist during the Arab Spring is the Yemeni journalist “Tawakkol Karman” who won the Nobel Prize. She has a leading role in journalism, public activities and women’s movements and rights.

Lebanon:

Going back to the current Lebanese revolution, all Lebanese women of all ages and professions are involved in the revolution. Being at the forefront, women presence encouraged families with young children to participate in the protests. A female protester shaped the revolution:

- She could be a doctor or a nurse taking care of the injured activist, or a mother who dreams for a better future for her and her family. For instance, we have known the famous picture on the front of Lebanese newspapers of a woman who lifted her newborn baby over the crowd a “Martyrs’ Square” between the Lebanese flags.
- She’s also the religious woman who infused faith in the activities and used prayers as a weapon for safety and hope. She is like an angel empowering everyone around her and making sure that the protesters are fed and hydrated.
- She’s, indeed, among the protesters a teacher or a professor who believes in her role to educate revolutionary students. Some university professors used the streets as a class and created round groups to continue their education and participate in the protests at the same time. Dr. “Carmen Geha”, an assistant professor at the American University of Beirut who specializes in political representation of women and protest movements in the Middle East, has been following the demonstrations closely.
- She’s additionally a young student who plans to study hard to secure a good career in her homeland.
- She is a filmmaker that empowers activist with her work, a photographer or a journalist witnessing the revolution, capturing the moments and writing about the events, or even a free activists using social media to document the real demonstration and updates.
- She’s an artist such as a singer that influences her fans to join the protests and empower them with her songs. For example, Elissa’s song “Am thour” which means “I rebelled”, had a great success and was played continually in the streets during the demonstrations. Or a painter illustrating the civil movement on the walls of the streets, or even a designer sharing caricatures online to send inspirational vibes.

All of these women were key mobilizers in this uprising, it’s their revolution! Every one of them has its own beauty and strength and contributed in her way to the Lebanese protest. On the first night of the protests in central Beirut, there was a scuffle between a cabinet minister’s bodyguards and protesters. As one of the guards brandished a gun, a woman named “Malak Alaywe” kicked him in the groin. The video of “Malak” went viral on the internet in the early days of the

protests and made her a symbol of the revolution. Her picture has been one of the most enduring and iconic images and then became a meme, stylized in an illustration, and brought more people out on to the streets. Her brave move broke gender stereotypes and showed the power of a woman in fighting the corrupted system, injustice and violence. As the protests grew in size, the first two nights were marked by violent clashes between police and protesters. Hence, the most impactful role of women in the protests is making them more peaceful where a group of women formed a human shield to protect protestors from riot police and separate the two sides. They defended themselves and those around them by standing as guardians and defenders of their fellow protesters. Social media pictured young women and girls forming barriers between the army and demonstrators to protect their male counterparts from the army violence. After one week of protests, police started removing roadblocks set up by protesters in “Beirut” by force, and again, a large group of women formed a barrier with their bodies that resulted the police back off. During all marches and sit-ins, they were on the frontlines standing in the faces of soldiers to prevent violence, facing assaults, attacks and injustice, and practicing their right of freedom. These Lebanese women are still wounded by the civil war, and they did their best to prevent repeating this painful experience again, they focused on the revolution, the peace of the nation and on the rights of everyone. Their actions work on gathering the communities and empowering all around them.

In an unprecedented move, “An-Nahar” newspaper published on its front page the Lebanese national anthem, adding “women” to the lyrics along with men. Thousands of women at marches, establishing the concept of gender equality, sang the revised anthem.

In addition to being active alongside men, and sometimes alone, in closing roads and occupying the squares and public facilities, women cooked meals and offered them to the protesters and sitters to support them, and initiated cleaning and recycling campaigns on a regular basis. These women have been waking up every morning at 8 AM to clean up the streets, and during the day, worked on sorting waste and recycling to make sure to keep their cities clean after the end of the protests. Downtown Beirut had different sit-ins and gatherings used as meeting points for discussions and debates with the participation of civil organizations and movements to raise awareness of the protesters about their rights. One of the meeting areas represents the feminist movement. It’s a spontaneous group of activists fighting for women’s rights in Lebanon. “Farah Baba”, 23 years old, is one of the initiators. They’ve been fighting peacefully and bravely for a better Lebanon and better rights. A funny way of protest was by a bride who insisted not to miss a day of demonstration, not even on her wedding day. Protesters chanted for her the lyrics of a traditional song that’s sung to a girl on her wedding day, but, with changing the lyrics from “She’s going out of her father’s house” to “She’s going to protest, she’s going to strike, she’s going to demand freedom, she’s going to take down a

regime.” Her revolutionary wedding will remain definitely a day to remember!

To sum up, Lebanon is facing a battle of meaning, citizenship and dignity. It's a struggle against demotivation and failure leading to disappointment. It will be a long fight against the ruling political class, in place for three decades, accused of mismanagement and corruption. Streets are full of hope for change, where Lebanese are writing their history. Thus, we can now say with confidence that women have been very visible in the ongoing protests. The revolution revealed the important role that women could play as leaders, where they were able to engage with slogans of the revolution, and to place their discourses on the table. They have been demanding better rights for themselves and for all. The road ahead is not easy, but Lebanese should keep hope for a better future and a gender-equal world to live in!

The views expressed by the author in the article are her personal.

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GENDER NORMS STILL THREATEN EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Ikenna Ugwu,

Social Activist, Nigeria, West Africa

With the United Nation's Agenda 2030 principle of "leave no one behind" came an important, yet ambitious goal for gender equality and women's rights. The place of gender equity in achieving the Global Goals remain indisputable. However, more than five years into the drive, despite substantial progress already made in some sectors, gender parity remains a far sight. We are on the threshold, stepping into the last decade before Agenda 2030 deadline, but progress reports insist we are "off track" to achieving the goals. The challenge, as we consider in this piece, is not just that women are left behind, but that the attendant social consequences of the shortfall, as expressed in cultural / gender norms, social policies among other factors that undermine gender equality and women's rights are costly – and is limiting progress in child education, especially in Africa's rural communities.

When we set policies and norms that undermine social inclusion and encourage gender disparity, we create limitless access to poor health, illiteracy, poverty etc, all of which can result from poor or non-education.

The world, for the past few decades has witnessed a resurgent interest in feminist jurisprudence which culminated in the emergence of numerous global strategies geared towards women empowerment and emancipation such as, the adoption by 189 governments, of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. There are other instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (1974); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2000) etc. These, no doubt, has marked a turning point in history of women's rights and remains a powerful source of inspiration in the effort to achieve equal opportunities for women and girls.

These legal instruments unanimously affirm that all human beings are born

free and equal in dignity and rights without any distinction of any kind, including sex. They recognize the fact that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of the society; that it prevents women's participation on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity. Yet, gender issues persist.

Understanding gender concept and norms in Africa

Although gender inequality is a pervasive global challenge that all governments, agencies and organisations are working hard to curtail, gender discussions in West is largely different from what we have in Africa, largely because of the fluidity and flexibility that has now permeated government and civic space. Scholars argue that gender discourse in the west, at the moment, is on "tubor charge". Traditionalists avoid the discourse because the word gender has been hijacked by grievance academic scholars. The argument in the academic circle is that gender discourse no longer focuses on traditional roles, rather on the multiple fluidity it has assumed.

But the situation in different Africa. Gender roles in Africa remains traditional, despite unsuccessful attempts to introduce such "unreasonable" fluidity: homosexuality and transgender issues has been greatly resisted in Africa. But culturally inspired gender roles and norms, have created, and continues to create wide gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa with devastating social, economic and health consequences on the female gender, who have been intensely marginalized and subjugated to the background.

In most parts of Africa, gender is popular as a framework and tool of analysis for youth program development. And most often, it is defined in terms of the disadvantages faced by women and girls. But we have too often forgotten that gender perspective must incorporate boys and men and its overarching implication for their development. In most of Africa, gender inequality concept is seen in (1) the determinant factors of social and cultural stratification reproducing relations that empower a particular gender while marginalizing and subordinating the other (2) the divisive practice that tells girls they are not good as the boys and therefore not equal and (3) the norms that says education is not good for a woman, that they mostly belong to the kitchen and "the other room" and several other ideas.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, certain cultural norms subject girls to early marriage, virginity testing, female genital mutilation among other terrible practices. These practices, invariably empower boys with more access to education, resources and opportunities but hinder girls and women from achieving same. And the consequences? – a troubling escalation in the number of out-of-school children.

Globally, an estimated 262 million children (which includes 64 million children

of primary school age) and youths are out of school according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics. But more than half of this data live in Sub-Saharan Africa. West Africa, countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Gambia Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso etc have managed to close the gender gap in primary school enrollment. However, reports claim that between 2015 – 2017, youth (aged 15-24) illiteracy rate in Chad rose twice as high for women than for men. In Liberia, only one-third of girls were enrolled in school in 2015, a development community workers claim was occasioned by cultural issues as early child marriage.

Where have we gotten with all these? In Nigeria, for instance, despite ratification of virtually all international instruments on protection and promotion of gender rights and equality, the country has failed to domesticate most of them, a situation that has slowed down the pace of women emancipation in Nigeria. And the situation is the same across sub-Saharan Africa. While we can appreciate progresses made in intervening decades in efforts made in realizing equal opportunities for women and girls, the lapses and gaps is still a frightening testimony that much more remain to be done if we must achieve gender equality and of course social inclusion, and by extension the global goals.

Gender norms and education

A people's culture is largely expressed or seen in their ideas, customs and social behaviours. But when a certain culture becomes inimical to the growth and development of the people, there is nothing moral and culturally upright in sustaining it. Africa, to a great extent is poor because of many anti-development cultures and believes it has continued to cling to. While it is believed that there is some level of awakening, most parts of the continent are still held in that "dark".

In 2017, the South African professor and gender activist, Relebohile Moletsane described issues of child marriage and how cultural practices are forcing girls out of school in South Africa. Moletsane talks about UkuphumaKweZintombi (the "Coming out Ball"), a festival that allows young girls perform local songs and parade around the field for men to choose as wife for themselves. "A woman is selected for marriage against her will but with enthusiastic approval of her parents," she says. The danger, as we see, is not just in the fact that the girls are married off early. Rather, the greater implication of this is the frightening phenomenon is that these practices force young girls out of school, and then into marriage. It is believed that quality education can help children to see and reach for the stars. But children forced out of school and too early into marriage will have no stars to see and may never reach them. Practices as this has done nothing but relegate education to the background, incubating atmosphere of poverty.

Child marriage and education in Africa

Child marriage. Can a girl ever reach the stars? Emphatically yes. And even

beyond! But not in a smug society/community that embraces archaic and unproductive cultural norms and is averse – albeit ignorantly - to the promises and gains of education. Even though there appears to be, glimpse of hope, as some parents are beginning to rise against norms that subjugate their daughters, as we begin to observe in some African communities such as the case in Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia etc, basic rights of women and girls are still very much denied. According to a report by Sahel Africa Club Secretariat in collaboration with the Development Center, one out of four women lack the “power to decide when, if at all, to have children, what the report called “reproductive autonomy”. Of course, when women marry early, they cannot go to school. And what’s more, they start having children and can no longer engage in productive activities. But most Africa’s rural dwellers have not come to terms with this; they lack the understanding that delaying marriage may have positive effects on the educational attainment of girls and their children; that it can contribute to lower population growth and increase women’s expected earnings.

Harmful cultural practices informed by unequal gender norms expose girls and young women to child marriage/bearing. When this happen, the underlying, horrifying implication is that they will never be able to negotiate for and make relevant decisions about their lives, and this, to a large extent limit their chances of completing their education.

It is reported that West and Central Africa have the second highest incidence of child marriage, at 41 percent and five West African countries (Niger, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone) are among the top 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage. One West African nation—Niger—has the highest prevalence in the world, with 75 percent of its female population married before the age of 18. While the rate of child marriage has declined in some countries with an otherwise high rate, such as Ethiopia, its prevalence has nonetheless remained constant over the past decade—from 50 to 48 percent in rural areas.

Teaching becomes “woman’s job”.

Government’s social policies affect every aspect of our lives. Education in Africa, so far, has not taken a center stage at the heart of the region’s government policies. From the curriculum to the salary and other welfare packages, governments across Sub-Saharan Africa have not shown sufficient commitment to deliver equitable and inclusive quality education to its citizens. An average teacher in Africa’s public school (basic schools in perspective) receives a salary package too meagre to feed him or her. For this reason, male teachers are now abandoning teaching in the hands of rural women as they hunt for more lucrative jobs in private institutions. But rural women have settled for the “peanuts” to manage their lives and families. And most critics blame this development for the poor quality of teachers and teaching we experience in rural communities.

Earlier in November 2019, I spent few weeks with my team at InspireEdu Initiative visiting rural public primary schools in local communities in Enugu state. Some of our findings points to social issues as government indifference to basic education in local communities. Assistant Headmistress, Mrs. Virginia Odoh said, “it is something you find almost everywhere. More than 80% of teachers you find in public schools are female. And the painful reason is that men no longer like to teach in rural public schools, because the salary package is too meagre it cannot feed him alone, how much more his family. But most women can decide to take the jobs because it is better to have a low-paying job than to sit at home without food for your children.”

Ajibo Marble, a grade 2 teacher at Joint Primary School asked me, “can you manage #15, 000 per month as a salary in Nigeria, as a family man?” There was pain in her eyes as she spoke. Poverty. Yet, the woman feels she can manage whatever comes from her labour of love to support her family. How does this affect the quality of education in these rural communities? I saw a crop of demotivated teachers, folks I believe cannot lead or show a child to the star, because they themselves never saw any star.

But why is teaching left in the hands of rural women and how much can we trust them with effective pedagogy? The argument as to why rural teaching staff is dominated by women is gaining momentum and is sustaining the usual narrative that women are “weak” and unambitious in this part of the world. But this is an incredibly hash and unfair way to depict a gender that has, in many quarters, demonstrated focus, drive and capacity. The African narrative about gender is a painful discourse. Gender roles and socio-cultural norms in many ways suppresses women rights and undermines gender equality drive.

But Edith Elliete, a Cameroonian human rights activists and One Young World Peace Ambassador connects the situation as found in most rural African communities to (1) policy issues that allows dominance of men in positions of power. “Society places a burden of caring for the family on her shoulders alone”, she says. Elliete maintains that women cannot grow professionally when she has to be a mother and a teacher to the kids, house caterer etc. When policies do not approve of paternity leave, it means only women can take care of kids and attend to other domestic responsibilities. She argues that because of this, companies shy away from employing or promoting them because they don’t want to give maternity leave.

Conclusions

To successfully end or reduce child marriage is to consistently and intentionally continue to promote girls’ education. This is because, in school, girls have better chance of safety and security, health and education. Creating a level-playing ground for girls in education has proved a global challenge, in spite of the progress recorded

in recent decades. But the situation appears to be worse in Africa's rural communities. The uses painted in the body of this work reflects the persistent gendered barriers that prevent many girls around the world from attending and completing school, child marriage in particular. Families make decisions about their daughters' marriages within the context of social norms, financial constraints, and economic opportunities. Changing these norms is the key to ending child marriage and achieving gender equality in education. This can be achieved through positive engagement of influential community members, including religious leaders.

Change strategies such as raising awareness of the problems associated with gendered norms and cultures that increase girls' access to education is critical. Also coordinating initiatives that will encourage abandonment of old norms and adoption of new norms mostly through legislative and/or participatory dialogue. Other approaches can express was in which new norm is consistent with cultural values or ways in which new norms can be adopted in ways that leave other values intact.

Finally, we must understand that as long as child marriage continues unchecked, we may not reach global development goals of universal education and gender equality in education. And that's to our collective undoing.

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MEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN NIGERIA.

Nnadi Emmanuel Ebuka,

Social Activist ,Nigeria, West Africa

Introduction

Female genital mutilation/Circumcision (FGM/C) describes any form of intentional procedure that alters the female genital organ, or either complete or partial removal of the female external genitalia for non-medical or therapeutic reasons (World Health Organization (WHO), 2018). It is largely practised in about 30 countries in Africa (Appendix D), the Middle East and Asia, and more than 200 million girls and women alive today in these regions have been genitally mutilated (Abdulcadir, Say, & Pallitto, 2017; WHO, 2018), with Nigeria accounting for about 25% of the number among adult women (Daniyan et al., 2018). It is estimated that about 3 million girls, usually between infancy and adolescence (and occasionally adult women) are at risk of being genitally mutilated annually (Ossai, Aniwada, Nwobi, & Ezeoke, 2018). In some settings, healthcare providers perform this with the notion that it is safer when done medically (Abdulcadir et al., 2017; WHO, 2018). There are diverse reasons for engaging in this practice which ranges from religious, aesthetic, myth (Ezenyeaku, Okeke, Chigbu, & Ikeako, 2011), and sociocultural reasons (Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018). Different stakeholders involved in the decision-making process that leads to FGM include but not limited to the parents and religious leaders (Adeniran et al., 2016). In most developing nations, the traditional circumcisers who are often birth attendants and sometimes people with respected roles in the community carry out this practice (WHO, 2018). It has been proven that this practice has no health importance, rather, associated with several medical complications such as severe bleeding, renal and urinary incontinence, infections, and contributes to maternal-child deaths (WHO, 2018); thereby, creating a global concern as a public health problem that infringes on the rights of girls and women (UNICEF, 2016). Globally, there has been efforts to stop the practice of FGM, and an overall decline in its prevalence recorded in most regions. However, despite the global efforts, it is still prevalent in some parts of

Nigeria (Daniyan et al., 2018). This could be attributed to the large population of Nigeria, and the general acceptance of the practise in most regions of the country (Ossai et al., 2018). With the current increase in global population, if proper measures are not taken, over the next 15 years, there would be a significant increase in the number of girls and women undergoing FGM (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2016). Hence, FGM poses both public health and human rights threats to women in Nigeria (Yaya & Ghose, 2018). However, it is on the basis of the health implications of FGM as a gross violation of the anatomical integrity of the women that its legislation as a of human rights abuse was enacted rather than on being a social ritual (Andro & Lesclingand, 2016).

Female Genital Mutilation: History, Classification, and Justifications

FGM is an ancient practice with an unclear origin but believed to be in existence for over 2000 years (FGM National Clinical Group, 2018; Daniyan et al., 2018). Evidence of communities familiar with the practice of Pharaonic type of FGM and some Egyptian mummies found with infibulation suggests FGM has Egyptian origin (Andro & Lesclingand, 2016). Others believe FGM started during the slave tradeduring which they subjected women to the practice to reduce their sexuality and control conception, and this isbelieved to have enhanced slave trading. However, others believe it has its origin in sub-Saharan Africa, where the practice is part of puberty rites among some ethnic groups as a measure to preserve virginity by reducing sexual desires (FGM National Clinical Group, 2018). In the western world, FGM is a product of migration, whichis done for conditions such as masturbation, hysteria, and nymphomania (Lorenzi, 2012, cited in Daniyan et al., 2018).

Generally, female genital mutilation is classified into four main types (WHO, 2018). Type 1 involves a partial or total removal of the small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals which is located on the outside of the body in front of the opening of the vagina (i.e. the clitoris), and sometimes, only the foreskin covering the clitoris (prepuce) that is cut or mutilated(Köbach, Ruf-leuschner, & Elbert, 2018). This process is referred to as clitoridectomy, and often 'Sunna' circumcision in some regions (Bikoo, 2007) (Appendix B).

Type 2, often referred to as 'excision' involves the partial or total excision/ removal of the clitoris and the inner folds of the vulva (i.e. the labia minora), and sometimes, with/without the removal of the outer folds of the skin (the labia majora) (Musolino, 2017; WHO, 2018) (Appendix B)

Infibulation or Pharaonic circumcision (Bikoo, 2007) is the type 3 form of the practice and involves the creation of covering seal to narrow the vaginal opening (Andro & Lesclingand, 2016). This is often a complicated process that involves cutting, repositioning and stitching of the labia minora or the labia majora with/ without the removal of the clitoris, leaving a small opening for the passage of urine

and menstrual blood flow (Effa, Ojo, Ihesie, & Meremikwu, 2017). This type is reported to be the most severe among the types and affects approximately 8million women mostly in Africa (Effa et al., 2017) (Appendix C)

Other numerous harmful procedures and practices ranging from scraping, piercing, incising, pricking and cauterising the female genitalia for non-therapeutic reasons is categorised as type 4 FGM (Musolino, 2017). Some other practices include stretching of the clitoris or labia, scrapping of the vaginal opening (Angurya cut) and vaginal wall incisions (Gishiri cut) for perceived treatment purposes (Daniyan et al., 2018), and tightening of the vagina by insertion of corrosive substances (Garba, Muhammed, Abubakar, &Yakasai, 2012) (Appendix C)

There are several reasons and notions for engaging in FGM/C in different regions and by different people in Nigeria (Daniyan et al., 2018). These include but not limited to socio-cultural reasons. Some people engage in FGM as a ritual to initiate the girl-child from childhood to womanhood; and also, to preserve the woman's premarital virginity, reduce libido and encourage fidelity in marriage (Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018). To some communities, this is done to be socially acceptable and avoid being excluded or stigmatised in their communities (Musolino, 2017). At family level, FGM is belief to promote fertility, prepares the young girl for marriage (Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018), increases the bride price, and gives gender identity to the lady(Daniyan et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2018). Certain tribes/ tradition believe women are emotionally weak, therefore, FGM is employed to put a check on their sexuality (Daniyan et al., 2018). To others, FGM improves sexual satisfaction in men (Ekwueme, Ezegwu, &Ezeoke, 2010). However, to the circumcisers who are often respected members of the society, the practice serves as a source of revenue to them (WHO, 2016).

Hygiene and aesthetic reasons for carrying out FGM in some regions include the notion that the external genitalia looks unattractive and unclean. Hence, the practice would help eliminate unpleasant odours and promote the health and beauty of the genitalia(Daniyan et al., 2018).

Spiritually,there is a belief that the circumcised female is clean, and by so doing, has fulfilled her religious obligations. Although neither the Bible nor the Koran subscribes to this practice, it is religiously practised among the believers of various religions (Andro & Lesclingand, 2016).

Myths and Superstitionshave also contributed to the practice of FGM in most communities in Nigeria (Ezenyeaku, Okeke, Chigbu, &Ikeako, 2011). Some of these include their beliefs that a baby would die if the clitoris touches him/her during childbirth (Daniyan et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2018). This is the reason the practice is predominant among the Yoruba tribe in South-West of Nigeria (Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada (RDIRB), 2018). Another belief has it that a man will die if his penis touches the clitoris; and, the clitoris if not excised, could grow like the man's penis (UNICEF, 2018).

Health Implication of Female Genital Mutilation: Paradoxical Approach

This vary broadly depending on the type and complexity of the procedure. It could be physical, psychological or sexual, and the effects can be acute (immediate) or long term (chronic)(Daniyan et al., 2018).

The immediate medical conditions that could result from FGM / C include severe bleeding from the blood vessel to the cut clitoris, shock from such haemorrhage (WHO, 2018). In addition, there are possible injuries to the surrounding organs including the urethra. For instance, in Northern Nigeria, Gishiri cut (a type 4 FGM) is associated with vesico-vaginal fistula (Tukur, Jido, & Uzoho, 2006). Others include severe pains, infections such urinary tract infections, septicaemia, tetanus, etc. ultimately, these complications could result to death (Abdulcadir, Say, & Pallitto, 2017; WHO, 2018).

On the long-term, the complications of FGM could result in gynaecological, urological and obstetric conditions. The gynaecological effects may include pelvic inflammatory diseases, pain, and infertility associated with genital infections, recurrent genital pain during and after intercourse (dyspareunia), obstruction of menstrual flow (haematocolpus) and sometimes fistula between the vagina and bladder or rectum (Yasin, Idris, & Ali, 2018). Others include formation of sebaceous cysts as a result of sebaceous gland blockage, keloid formation, dermoid cyst formation and genital ulcer (Puppo, 2017).

Urological complications include painful, difficult and sometimes uncontrollable urination, with recurrent urinary tract infection (Berg, Underland, Odgaard-Jensen, Fretheim, & Vist, 2014). Research has shown that women who have undergone FGM are three times more susceptible to developing urinary tract infections than the uncircumcised (Okonofua et al., 2002). Consequently, women who have undergone type 3 FGM are more likely to develop urologic complications (Effa et al., 2017). In obstetric complications, there is always the risk of post-partum haemorrhage associated with perineal tears due to the scarring of the vulva caused by genital cutting (Yasin, Idris & Ali, 2018). There exist a risk of infant and maternal death associated with these complications (WHO, 2018), with possible transmission of human immunodeficiency virus, viral hepatitis and tetanus linked to the use of unsterilized equipment (Daniyan et al., 2018). In addition, despite these complications, only a few women seek for interventions except when their health is seriously threatened (Adeniran, Aboyeji, Balogun, & Ijaiya, 2014). Research findings have it that most of the health complications associated with FGM in historically endemic regions is mostly associated with poor access to maternal and infant health facilities (Andro & Lesclingand, 2016).

Although there is much evidence on the physical health implications of FGM (Behrendt & Moritz, 2005), only limited information about the emotional/ psychological impacts has been recorded (Mulongo, Mcandrew, & Martin, 2014). Moreover, despite being in practise for centuries, as at year 2000, only about 15%

of studies around FGM paid attention to the mental health issues associated with the practice (WHO, 2000). Notwithstanding the low number of empirical research evidence on the psychological implications of FGM, it is obvious there exist, compromised mental health of women who have, or yet to undergo FGM (Behrendt & Moritz, 2005; Chibber, El-Saleh & Harmi, 2011; Mulongo et al., 2014; Vloeberghs, Knipscheer, van der Kwaak, Naleie, & van den Muijsenbergh, 2011).

The psychological implications may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, phobias, and anxiety disorder (Adelufosi, Edet, Arikpo, Aquaisua, & Meremikwu, 2017; WHO, 2018). Others include symptoms of impaired cognition often associated with insomnia, loss of appetite, recurring nightmare, panic attacks, and low self-esteem (Behrendt & Moritz, 2005; Mulongo et al., 2014). Studies have demonstrated that these symptoms are more prevalent among FGM women relative to other women who have not undergone FGM within the same country (Lever, Ottenheimer, Teysir, Singer, & Atkinson, 2018).

PTSD occurs secondary to a traumatic exposure which results in the victim developing an unusual expression of fear and helplessness due to frequent recurring of the negative memories (Roberts, Gilman, Breslau, Breslau, & Koenen, 2011). The consequences may include suicidal attempts, impaired functioning, and secondary mental health issues (Farley & Patsalides, 2001).

Based on available data on the psychological consequences of FGM, several factors have been identified to be associated with distress and these include loss of fertility secondary to FGM, immediate post-FGM complications, complicated and severe FGM procedures, performing FGM as a punishment and other compulsive practices against adolescents and adults (Lockhat, 2004; Mulongo et al., 2014).

The Paradox of Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria

Although the Western society condemns FGM practice, and despite its tremendous physical and medical effects, it is notable that some females who have not undergone any form of FGM experience more adverse psychological challenges when live in communities where FGM is culturally practiced (Chalmers & Hashi 2000). This is often due to fear of being socially excluded for losing their cultural identity, which may result in anxiety and mental distress (Mulongo et al., 2014).

Similarly, studies have shown that women who have undergone FGM have reduced psychological illness relative to the uncircumcised in the same community. However, this is believed to be as a result of their cultural belief that a woman has to be circumcised to be seen as good, which gives the circumcised, the sense of pride, fulfilment, and the feeling of being made whole (Mulongo et al., 2014). According to reports, women who have undergone FGM attest that despite recalling the intense fear, pain and the medical challenges they experienced, their perceived benefits of beauty, purity, pride, and social acceptance motivated them to engage

in the practice (Chalmers & Hashi, 2000).

A research carried out in the Southeast of Nigeria shows that knowledge, attitude and behaviours of people vary before and after their exposure to FGM, and this is complexed by cultural practices (Ekwueme, Ezegwu, & Ezeoke, 2010). For instance, the research demonstrated that prior to FGM interventions; people based their knowledge about FGM on their inherent culture and tradition, which made them develop negative attitudes such as stigmatisation toward the uncircumcised, hence promoted the practice. The women also admitted to being promiscuous prior to circumcision but developed better behaviours after FGM. Since this was rooted in their cultural and traditional practices, it motivates them to encourage the practice in those communities. However, after FGM interventions within the same group, there was a tremendous improvement on their behaviours and knowledge of FGM, and their attitudes towards the uncircumcised changed (Ekwueme, Ezegwu, & Ezeoke, 2010; Mulongo et al., 2014).

In order to understand the attitude of adolescent male toward FGM, a cross-sectional research carried out in South-west of Nigeria found that although 40.8% frowned at the practice, 33.5% were in support of the practice while 27.3% and 23.6% respectively admitted to the benefits of FGM, and would do that to their female children. On the contrary, another research carried out among Sudanese men with two wives (one circumcised and uncircumcised) showed that sexually, 89% of men preferred the uncircumcised women (Dorkenoo, 1994). This shows how important it is to target intervention efforts toward future fathers as key stakeholders in FGM/C decision-making process (Adeniran et al., 2016).

Coping Strategies and Interventions

Four categories of women identified with respect to how they cope with FGM with/without seeking for support include the adaptive woman, the traumatised woman, the disempowered woman, and the religious woman (Mulongo et al., 2014; Vloeberghs, 2011).

According to the findings, the 'Adaptive' women are those who experienced mainly physical and sexual problems because of FGM and were able to cope and adapt with their conditions. However, the 'Religious' women consider sexuality as a private thing, hence, preferred not to discuss about it. This group claimed to know how to deal with their problems. Therefore, relative to the non-religious women, this group expressed less fear and depression (Mulongo et al., 2014; Vloeberghs, 2011).

The 'Disempowered' women are characterised by their unwillingness to share their emotions, anger and defeat, but rather develop negative coping strategies to their problems such as drug abuse, hence, worsening their conditions. Among the 'Traumatised' women are those who have experienced psychological challenges

ranging from anxiety, recurrent memories, sleep problems, and depression as result of the practice. They are usually those who have had infibulation, and experienced pains and sadness, often divorced or in unstable relationships (Mulongo et al., 2014; Vloeberghs, 2011).

WHO (2016) recommends that women living with type 3 FGM undergo deinfibulation (either antepartum or postpartum) to prevent and treat obstetric complications, and enhance childbirth in such women. For individuals with urologic complications (especially recurrent urinary tract infection and urine retention), deinfibulation is highly recommended as a corrective measure. Using female sexual function index (FSFI), clitoral reconstructive surgery has also been demonstrated to improve sexual functions in women (Vital et al., 2016)

To ensure mental health, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is recommended for females living with FGM who present with symptoms such as anxiety disorders, depression or posttraumatic stress disorder. This is also essential for those undergoing corrective FGM surgeries. For women who experience sexual dysfunction because of FGM, sexual counselling is effective in the prevention and treatment (WHO, 2016).

There is need to understand that FGM is culturally embedded regardless of the type and its psychological implications (Berg, Denison & Fretheim, 2010). This provides an insight towards providing culture-sensitive and coping-strategic interventions against FGM (Berg et al, 2010; Vloeberghs, 2011; WHO, 2016). In most regions including Nigeria, the decision concerning FGM/C is often beyond the nuclear family; therefore, interventions should target the key stakeholders in FGM decision-making process including the fathers and the extended families (Kaplan et al., 2013).

Social researchers have suggested that it could be more effective to adopt programmes which present FGM as an abuse of human rights contrary to social campaigns which are perceived as being culturally interfering (Shell-Duncan, 2008; Yaya & Ghose, 2018). In addition, media programmes that display local contents about FGM could also help to effect attitudinal changes in people (Vogt, Zaid, Ahmed, Fehr, & Efferson, 2016).

The World Health Organization in conjunction with the United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA) in 1997 issued a joint statement against the practice of FGM to consolidate on previous global efforts to end FGM, and consequently, made several researches, community works, and public policy changes to counter the practice. This has gained tremendous success including getting international bodies involved in the fight, monitoring, and setting resolutions against the practice. There have also been legal frameworks, revised in 26 African countries and the Middle East to end FGM and in about 33 other countries with migrant populations from FGM-practising countries. Recently, the number of men and women who support forces against the practice in most communities has increased, and this has

resulted in a reduction in the prevalence of FGM in those regions (WHO, 2018).

Furthermore, to hasten the elimination of FGM, UNFPA and UNICEF in 2007 established the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (Mpinga et al., 2016; UNFPA, 2014). In 2008, WHO and nine other United Nations partners released a statement, 'Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: an interagency statement' with evidence gathered from the previous years about the practice. Later in December 2012, there was an adoption of a resolution on the elimination of FGM by the UN General Assembly to increase the effort to eliminate FGM, as it is an abuse to human rights (WHO, 2016). Consequently, there has been tremendous efforts by WHO to improve the knowledge, attitude and skills of health workers in the prevention and management of FGM (WHO, 2018).

Conclusion:

Female genital mutilation is an abuse of human right, with devastating implications on the health of the victims. In Nigeria, this has recorded serious health effects, which has much undocumented socioeconomic implications on the development of the country. In addition, there exist a very limited evidence on the psychosocial effects of FGM, and the medical implications questioned. This raises concerns about designing evidence-based intervention strategies to end the practice. Therefore, recommended that social scientists and public health practitioners put in more efforts in researching on both subject areas to ensure evidence-based decision-making process towards the eradication of FGM in Nigeria

Moreover, due to limited available data, it is hard to guarantee the real impacts of existing intervention strategies. However, some interventions seem more promising than others do. For instance, interventions that focus on human rights have proven more effective than those that directly target the cultural factors. This could serve as a guide when designing health promotion programmes in multicultural and/or culture-sensitive populations for more effective outcomes.

It is also essential to employ interagency collaboration in the efforts to mitigate the practice of FGM in Nigeria. Hence, a combination of education, advocacy and legislation could yield positive results in achieving this objective.

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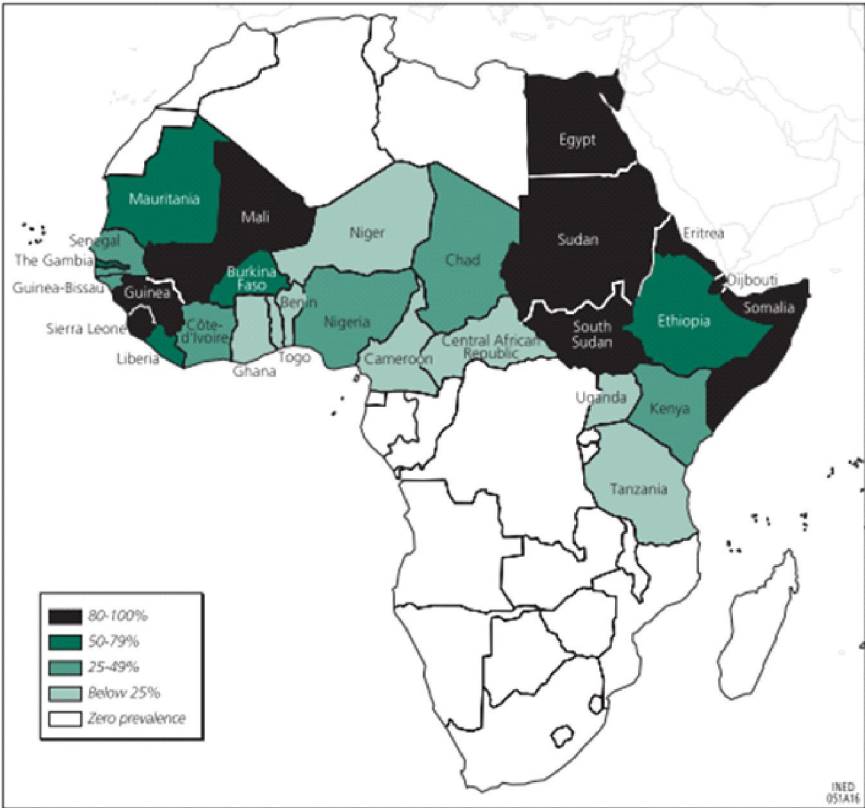
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Figure 1. Prevalence of FGM in Africa



(Andro & Lesclingand, 2016)

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ADAPTATION IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: A LENS OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN ZIMBABWE.

Rodrick Moyo

*Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association,
Zimbabwe, Southern Africa.*

Introduction

Climate-related shocks and stresses are adding pressure to the already precarious livelihoods of marginalised peoples experiencing poverty and a range of other constraints in the global South - and will increasingly do so with progressive climate change¹. It remains a major challenge affecting developing countries due to the presence of multiple stressors alongside absence of budgetary assets to address immediate demands of adaptation and mitigation actions. In Zimbabwe increasing climate variability associated with extreme temperatures especially in the last 2 years 2017 and 2018², late onset of the rainy season and its early secession, increased cyclone induced flooding throughout the country although still a contentious one at the moment all are pointing towards a ravenous climate change scenario with is impending harder on Zimbabwe.

At the same time, it is the vulnerable and marginalised who have the least capacity or opportunity to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate or to participate in negotiations on adaptation. As women constitute the largest percentage of the world's poorest people, they are most affected by these changes. Children and youths especially girls and elderly women, are often the most vulnerable.

Gendered perspective

There has been relatively limited in-depth analysis of the gender dimensions

¹ Nelson (2011)

² Climate Change Law in Zimbabwe: Concepts and Insights chapter 2

of climate change to date, partly because of the uncertainties of climate change science and the lack of downscaled data which makes it hard to predict how the climate will change at a very local level, and because social change processes are difficult to predict. However, the literature indicates that women are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change, because they are more likely to be found in the poorest sections of society, have fewer resources to cope, and are more reliant on climate-sensitive resources because of the gender division of labour. They tend to have lesser access to livelihood resources and hence more limited capacity to participate in climate change adaptation processes – although they should be treated as active agents rather than victims. Although, all members of poorer communities will be affected, women and female headed households are likely to be most affected by increasing extreme weather events, greater climate variability and long-term shifts in climate averages. Even where there is a lack of hard evidence, it is commonly recognised that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities in the key dimensions that are not only the building blocks of livelihoods, but are also crucial for coping with change, including for example: wealth; access to and understanding of technologies; education; access to information; and access to resources.

Where does a country such as Zimbabwe stand considering the presence of multiple stressors such as the gender dynamics amongst with inequality issues which are to be more propagated by climate change. The country has been undergoing a period of economic decline characterized with a massive hyperinflation period whilst on the other hand the government has been trying to address key issues of development such as tailor making legislation in such a way that it holistically becomes a tool that addresses issues to do with human development as the country braces itself towards the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

Interrogating a gendered lens on the impacts of climate change

1. Gender, health and climate change

It has been widely recognised that rising water levels associated with climate change will lead to an increase in water borne diseases. Occurrence of natural disasters such as cyclones with associated flooding usually results in offshoots of biological hazards promoting water borne diseases. Other likely health consequences of climate change include higher rates of starvation due to food shortages, increase in heat related mortality which information is not fully accounted for in Zimbabwe. Due to heavy reliance on rainfed agriculture more than 8 million³ people in Zimbabwe were at a risk of hunger and starvation during the 2019 El Niño effect

³ Newsday Zimbabwe

which resulted in a prolonged drought throughout the country. Cyclone Idai which affected the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe exposed the affected communities to the risk of cholera and malaria outbreak. The United Nations⁴ estimated that about 1.2million children especially those under the age of five as main victims of sanitation-related diseases and the elderly in periods of natural disasters. Contagious diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and typhoid projected to be on the rise in the area. Gender discrimination in the allocation of resources, including those relating to nutrition and medicines, may put girls at greater risk than boys. More research into the gender-specific health impacts of climate change on children and adolescent's in Zimbabwe would help to illuminate the extent to which this is the case, and would in turn enable a more targeted response.

In the aftermath of any natural disaster women and girls generally are to take care for the sick as exemplified in Chimanimani post Cyclone Idai disaster. This is not a new but a homogenous feature with trend analysis indicating similarity around the world particularly in times of disaster and natural stress. Consequently, their economic productivity is reduced as time for engaging in income generating activities is limited, added to rising medical costs due to the disaster casualties, their levels of poverty are heightened. This can explain why inequality is still widening within some regions and countries where natural disasters are prone. Their contribution to community level decision making processes on climate or disaster risk reduction will be reduced. Furthermore, bearing the burden of safeguarding dependents, while being responsible for fetching water and firewood through travelling longer distances makes women and girls vulnerable to exhaustion and stress related diseases⁵⁶. Failure to access healthcare due to lack of economic assets, coupled with cultural restrictions on their mobility which prohibit them from travelling to seek for healthcare within some communities are another barriers which women may face.

A decline in food security and livelihood opportunities can cause considerable stress for men and boys more broadly, given the socially ascribed expectation that they will provide economically for the household. This can lead to mental ill health in some cases. It has been recognised that men and boys are less likely to seek help for stress and mental health issues than women and girls⁷, meaning that preparation for, and responses to, climate change need to be sensitive to gender differentials in healthcare (including mental) seeking behavior. Stress is likely to be heightened after disasters, particularly where families are displaced and must live in emergency or transitional housing. Overcrowding, lack of privacy and the collapse of regular routines and livelihood patterns can contribute to anger, frustration and violence, with children (especially girls) and women most vulnerable

⁴ United Nations, 2006

⁵ Voluntary Services Overseas, 2006

⁶ CIDA, 2002

⁷ Masika 2002

2. Gender, food security and climate change

AFDB (2011)⁸ connotes that regardless of its causes and precise timelines climate change represents one of the most challenging threats to sustainable development for all those living in Africa. The continent is home to the most susceptible populations of the world, because of the sensitivity and fragility of its natural environment, and its high dependence on environment-based livelihoods, such as agriculture. In Zimbabwe climatic changes have also made it difficult for the communities to master and follow their traditional ways of weather prediction. The rainfall patterns have not been uniform and predictable. The pointers which used to determine rainfall patterns are no longer reliable.

None agricultural food items have not been spared as evidenced by the disappearance of mopane worms because of low rainfall. Inadequate rainfall reduces leaf growth of mopane trees on which mopane worms feed on leading to their disappearance. In Kezi 2014 due to low rainfall there was a significant drop of in the yield of mopane worms affecting the diet of the Kezi rural population and leading to food insecurity. In case of adequate rainfall there is abundant yield of mopane worms e.g. in 2017 due to increased rainfall there was an increased yield of mopane worms in Gwanda. Consequently this has an impact on gender especially women who bare the burden of taking care of the family.

3. Gender, water and climate change

Literature on gender and environment has long observed differentiated roles within water usage by both men and women. Generally, in Zimbabwean rural areas which is typically of Southern Africa women and girls are responsible for fetching water for drinking, cooking, washing, hygiene amongst most domestic purposes, while men use water for irrigation or livestock rearing and industrial usage. These distinct and unique roles mean that women and men often have different needs and priorities regarding water uses. But while this knowledge isn't 'new', it does take on a new and pressing significance in the context of climate change. It is estimated that by 2025, almost two thirds of the world's population are likely to experience water stress, and for one billion of them the shortage will be severe and socially disruptive⁹. For South Africa alone by 2050, climate change projected to be having an impact on water availability almost throughout the country. Increased drying or flooding expected, with the potential for strong localized effects. This is particularly true of regions with small water resource management systems.

A close look at drought prone areas in Zimbabwe and those located in agroecological regions which receives lesser rainfall such as Insiza, Gwanda and Bikita were most women rely on rain water and very few with alternative sources.

⁸ African Development Bank, 2011

⁹ WEDO 2003: 61

Even those who try irrigation schemes as a means of adaptation, they are faced with the challenge of exorbitant water charges by the Zimbabwe National Water Authority in view of the state of communal farmers. The Water Act¹⁰ allows the Zimbabwe National Water Authority to charge water provision to farmers who are involved in irrigation projects which further disenfranchises women to partake in this climate change adaptive type of farming as they usually lack the economic capacity.

This is likely to have a particularly harsh effect on women and girls because of their distinct roles in relation to water use and their specific vulnerabilities in the context of disasters. In drought-prone areas affected by desertification especially in the western part of Zimbabwe, for example, the time absorbed by water collection will increase as women and children (mostly girls) will have to travel greater distances to find water. The heavy rainfalls and more frequent floods predicted to result from climate change will also increase women's workloads, as they will have to devote more time to collecting water, and to cleaning and maintaining their houses after flooding. This is time that could be spent in school, earning an income or participating in public life. Walking long distances to fetch water and fuel can expose women and girls to harassment or sexual assault, especially in communal areas – there are many accounts of women and girls attacked searching for firewood.

In the advent of climate change, it is imperative that policies, regulations, strategies and programs draw on the existing body of knowledge on gender and water to inform interventions and scale these up fast. There is evidence that simple strategies work. For example, providing local water sources frees up time for women to engage in income-generation by reducing the time required to fetch water and making domestic tasks faster to complete. Equally important is the construction of more water sources such as solar powered boreholes like those in Matopo, Gwanda and other urban areas of Zimbabwe. These sources of water can serve as economic empowerment tool for women through alternative livelihood programs that can be undertaken in these areas such as horticulture to improve both food security and income capacity.

4. Gendered impacts of climate change on wage labour

Women's access to economic resources in terms of income and property ownership including land is already often unequal, particularly in developing countries. A gender gap in earnings persists across almost all employment categories, including informal wage employment and self-employment¹¹. In Zimbabwe women comprise the majority of those working in the informal sector which is often worst hit by climate change-related disasters and other shocks, further exacerbating women's already unequal access to resources and diminishing their capabilities to

¹⁰ Water Act, chp

¹¹ ILO, 2007

cope with unexpected events/disasters or adapt to change. The Gender Action Plan¹² adopted during the Conference of Parties 25 in Spain 2019 acknowledged the importance of gender-responsive means of implementation of climate policies as an action that can enable Parties to raise ambition on climate action. This approach can enhance gender equality and ensure a just transition of the workforce, creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities. A very urgent need is to undertake studies which can accurately map impacts of climate change on gender and labour in the African region to trace patterns. Output from this work could serve as baseline for policy on labour rights at national and international levels. The role of labour unions in advocating and raising awareness of women's rights amongst women workers and in reporting back to employers on unjust practices cannot be further emphasized. Policy should safeguard labour rights of women, access to union and contracts especially in the edge of insecurity caused by climate change

6. Gendered impacts of climate change-related disasters

Gender inequality is a key contributor to increased vulnerability of women and girls in disaster situations-such as Cyclone Idai weather system which hit the eastern side of Zimbabwe, a highly impoverished part of the country on 15 and 16 March 2019 with Chimanimani and Chipinge districts hard knocked. Trend analysis points frequent occurrence of these natural disasters which leave behind a trail of destruction in Southern Africa as resulting from climate change. A report by the World Conservation Union / Women's Environment and Development Organization (IUCN/WEDO) estimated that women and children were 14 times likely to die than men during disasters¹³. Gender and age differentials in mortality and injuries rates were strikingly apparent in the aftermath of the Cyclone Idai where possible the larger number of fatalities were women and those under age. The challenge faced by the country is incapacitation of institutions mandated to deal with these incidences and do real time monitoring. Whether or not the cyclone was directly related to climate change, it does provide vital lessons about the impacts of a large-scale disaster and effectiveness of risk response mechanisms in place.

Successful cases of women involved in adaptation activities

Technical skills for women

Improving purchasing parity of women in the advent of climate change is an urgent need considering that their sources of livelihood would be under threat due to weather uncertainties. The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association is implementing a project in Zvishavane, Mhondongori to demonstrate rights in action

¹² UNFCCC, Gender Action Plan

¹³ (IUCN/WEDO 2007)

by equipping women with skills of producing various products namely washing powder, washing soap, petroleum jelly and candles. These women are encouraged to utilize finished products to cushion themselves against hunger and starvation especially in times of drought upscaling such initiatives is very necessary



Project beneficiaries take turns to inspect the washing powder in Mapirimira

Mutoko Green project Mashonaland, Mutoko district, Mashonaland East province, Zimbabwe.

Almost 70% of women who are involved in rural agriculture in Sub Saharan countries lack access to markets for their produce. Post-harvest losses¹⁴ and poor farming methods already adds pressure to the looming disaster posed by the unreliable rainfalls. Interestingly the notion of Climate Smart Agriculture practices being undertaken by the community since 2017, has improved food security through an integrated farming system that consist of organic garden and organic aquaculture that has been derived for sustainability. However, looking ahead and the urgency of intervention required, proper mechanisms need to be put in place for this agripreneurship to expand and become a center of agri-tourism in the village. The essential factors that distinguish aquaculture from other forms of fisheries is to enhance healthy food security for all lives.

¹⁴ World Bank,(2011)



Highly nutrient water from fish pond used to water the garden.

Conclusion

Adaptation needs and priorities:

In view of the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change on communities within the context of gender there is a need of setting priorities in adaption for Zimbabwe and the rest of Southern Africa. Recognizing the vulnerable nature of women and their present dominant state in Zimbabwe and how climate change is negatively affecting them is most important¹⁵. Cyclone Idai which hit the country in 2019 and the number of recorded deaths entailed more women dead than men. Disaster Risk Response and Disaster Management focus need to be placed and highly prioritized amongst women. Early warning systems and capacity to immediately respond to information of this nature having women at its core will ensure a reduced impact of any weather-related hazard.

¹⁵ GoZ, National Climate Change Response Strategy

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THE VICTIMIZED GENDER WITH A HOPE, INEQUALITIES AND SOLUTIONS

Shamim Reza Ahammad,

M.Sc. (Biotechnology), LL.B

*'Just as a bird cannot fly with one wing only, a Nation cannot march forward
if the women are left behind'. _ Swami Vivekananda*

Sometimes I wonder what the world would have been like if women were considered superior to men. Quite likely, all unfairness would have wrapped the heterogametic sex vis-à-vis males. Imagine what would have been the position of males then, being victimized and neglected everywhere. Though it is hard-hitting to live on in such a society but the actual authenticity here lays in the fact that such state of affairs are being tormented not by the heterogametic sex but by the homogametic sex vis-à-vis females. If we undergo deep rooted into the biological aspect of this, the sex of an individual is determined by a pair of sex chromosomes. Females typically have two of the same kind of sex chromosome (XX), and are called homogametic sex, whereas males typically have two different kinds of sex chromosomes (XY), and are called heterogametic sex. Thus, the term 'sex' is a biological and physiological phenomenon which defines man and woman. Whereas, 'Gender' is a socio- cultural term referring socially defined roles and behaviours assigned to 'males' and 'females' in a given society. In its social, historical and cultural aspects, gender is a function of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women. Therefore, gender may be understood as a man-made concept, while 'sex' is natural or biological characteristics of human beings. Therefore, it is the social, historical and cultural aspects which are deviating from the path of equality towards inequality between a masculine and feminine and not the biology.

Gender inequality, in simple words, may be defined as discrimination against

women based on their sex. Women are traditionally considered by the society as weaker sex. She has been accorded a subordinate position to men². She is exploited, degraded, violated and discriminated both in our homes and in outside world. This peculiar type of discrimination against women is prevalent everywhere in the world and more so in Indian society.

Today, it cannot be denied that a bisection of the nation i.e women, are still under community-based restraints and they have agonized great hardships in Indian history. They have suffered from lack of social liberty and have been victims of faced social evils like child marriages, polygamy, and enforced widowhood. Not only this, in the social and cultural domains, they have lost their whereabouts. In the economic areas of activity, though they play a vital role, but their participation in are hardly recognized, and as a class they continue to occupy a secondary position. Unfortunately, their helplessness indifferent walks of life have led to their exploitation at almost every step. Being underprivileged, discriminated and deprived of everything they are no less than a victimized gender of hope and nor better than bonded slaves.

GENDER INEQUALITIES EXISTING IN INDIA-

Social Discrimination:

Premature discrimination ranging from childhood to adulthood is often faced by a girl child. Despite the fact that principles of gender equality and gender equity are basic to Indian thinking, girls in our country are still deprived of equal opportunities for survival and development. Although many social activists and reformers carried their battled against all social odds to renovate honour and dignity to women, behavioral discrepancy still hunts our pastoral masses. Regardless of pronounced social development and technological advancement, women in our society carry on to be victims of exploitation, fallacy, illiteracy, and social mayhem.

A viable cause of gender disparity can be visualized through the social stigma that women are housekeepers and should be confined to the four walls of the house. They should not raise their voice regarding their fortune for the sake of the prestige of the family. In patriarchal society a lot of weightage is given to men³.

Health and Nutrition:

In the health and nutritional field, male members of family are supposed to take fresh and nutritious food in comparison to women because either they are earning members or head of the family or they are supposed to be more important

² Available at https://www.worldwidejournals.com/global-journal-for-research-analysis-GJRA/special_issues

³ Available at <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/india-2/gender-discrimination-in-india-6-major-causes/47671>

than female members. Born into indifference and reared on neglect, the girl child is caught in a web of cultural practices and prejudices that hamper her development both physically and mentally. It has also been observed that discrimination against girls actually starts in the womb. Many parents have aborted female fetuses because society places a high emphasis on giving birth to male children. It is pertinent to note that still in this modern age in many families son preference is going on. Girls are often denied the right to be healthy. The infant mortality rate of girls is higher than those of the boys. Girls are often more susceptible to all types of violence. This type of social attitude is conducive to create the problem of gender discrimination.

Infanticide and Female Foeticide:

Female foeticide and infanticide are the most hideous outcome of sex discrimination⁴. The issue of girl infanticide or murder of children because they are female is of growing concern everywhere in the contemporary society. This violation to a girl's basic right to life requires urgent attention and action. In a first ever global study on female infanticide by Asian Centre for Human Rights, a Delhi-based NGO dedicated to protection of human rights, has revealed that preference of son over daughter is a major reason for female infanticide in many countries around the world. India has one of the highest female foeticide incidents in the world. The female child population in the age group of 0-6 years declined from 78.83 million in 2001 to 75.84 million in 2011. During the period 1991-2011, the child sex ratio (0-6 years) declined from 945 to 914⁵.

According to a recent report by the UNICEF up to 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population as a result of systematic gender discrimination in India. In most countries in the world, there are approximately 105 female births for every 100 males. In India, there are less than 93 women for every 100 men in the population⁶. The accepted reason for such a disparity is the practice of female infanticide and female foeticide in India and it is mainly due to the costs involved with the raising of a girl and eventually providing her an appropriate marriage and dowry. It is shameful that in India these practices are prevailing at a large scale.

Employment:

It is enduring to note that in employment sectors also gender inequality persists. Indian women are for the most part responsible for child care and household tasks. Time spent in bearing and rearing of children often results in de-Skilling, termination of long term labour contacts. Thus women are not being able to be economically self sufficient due to unemployment and their economic dependence on the male counterpart is itself a cause of gender disparity.

⁴ Available at <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2021%20Issue6>

⁵ Available at <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/india-witnesses-one-of-the-highest-female-infanticide-incidents-in-the-world-54803>

⁶ Available at <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2021%20Issue6/Version-5>

According to an estimate by the National Commission on Self-Employed women, 94% of the total female workforce operates within this highly exploited sector. Employment in this sector is characterized by low pay, long works of trade unions/organizations to facilitate the mobilization of workers and knit them into a conscious workforce.

The Pan India Survey of organizations launched by Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Indian Women Network (IWN), in association with EY have revealed that women face bias at workplaces in India. As per the survey despite substantial rise in the number of women joining workforce in India, gender parity continues to suffer, especially at senior positions. It was observed that 16 per cent respondents reported having no women on the board and 47 per cent reported that there are no more than 5 percent women in senior management roles⁷. Some of the major challenges that hinder the progress of diversity and inclusion initiatives include, unconscious bias, ineffective implementation of policies, fewer women in leadership roles, lack of awareness about the benefits of gender diversity, the survey noted. According to this survey, 42 per cent female respondents said they face managerial bias.

Violences against women:

Today it is the era of development and modernization, but still it is hard to believe that there are reports which suggest that a section of the women in India are going through varied forms of violence every day. They ought to have lived a normal life but the verve of gender inequality is making their life a misery. The sadism of such violence's is of various types and can happen at any place like homes, public places or offices towards women. It is the big issue related to the women which cannot be ignored as it is obstructing almost one half growth of the country. From the primordial days women in the Indian society have always been considered as the things of enjoyment. They have been victims of the humiliation, exploitation and torture by the men from the time of social organization and family life.

The estimates provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that about 1 in 3 (35 percent) of women and girls worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. However, these numbers – shocking as they are – only tell part of the story⁸.

Various forms of violence's prevail against woman in our country as well. The

7 Available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/women-face-bias-at-workplaces-in-india-gender-parity-a-problem-at-senior-levels-survey/articleshow/63732652.cms>

8 Available at <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/violence-against-women-cause-consequence-inequality.html>

most prevalent being wife battering, sexual harassment at workplace, Dowry and Rape etc.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA-

Indian Constitution provides for positive efforts to eliminate gender inequality; the Preamble to the Constitution talks about goals of achieving social, economic and political justice to everyone and to provide equality of status and of opportunity to all its citizens.

Constitutional Rights to Women:

The rights and safeguards enshrined in the constitution for women in India are: The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex [Article 15(1)]; The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women [Article 15(3)]; No citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex [Article 16(2)]; Traffic in human beings and forced labour are prohibited [Article 23(1)]; The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood [Article 39(a)]; The state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women [Article 39(d)]; The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength [Article 39(e)]; The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief [Article 42]; It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51-A(e)].

Legal Rights to Women:

In India, there are various legislation which provide for several rights and safeguards towards women. Among them some of which may be listed includes- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005); Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (1956); Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act (1987) ; Dowry Prohibition Act (1961); Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (1986); Maternity Benefit Act (1961); Pre-Conception and Pre- Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (1994); Equal Remuneration Act (1976); Minimum Wages Act (1948); Indian Penal Code (1860) containing provisions to protect Indian women from dowry death, rape, kidnapping, cruelty and other offences; Mines Act (1952) and Factories Act (1948) prohibiting the employment of women between 7 P.M. to 6 A.M. in mines and factories and provides for their safety and welfare; National Commission for Women Act (1990) providing for the establishment of a National Commission for Women to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal rights and safeguards of women; Sexual Harassment

of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013).

So, there are varied legislative safeguards and protection mechanisms for women but the ground reality is very different. Despite all these provisions women are still being treated as second rate citizens in our country; men are treating them as an object to fulfill their carnal desires; crimes against women are at alarming stage; the practice of dowry is still widely prevalent; female infanticide is a norm in our homes.

ERADICATION OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND SOLUTIONS-

Today it has become a hope that the contemporary society of victimized gender is looking forward to those days when the mentality of men will change; when the male species of human beings would start treating women as equal and not subordinate or weaker to them. In fact not only men, but women also need to change their mindset as through cultural conditioning they have also become part of the same exploitative system of patriarchy and are playing a supportive role in furthering men's agenda of dominating women. The list of legislations as well as types of discriminations or inequalities may go on but the real change will foster only with the mindset being altered.

Innovative and aggressive policy that aims to change outcomes (such as increasing women's voice in the community) may change these norms. Although norms should guide the design of culturally sensitive policies and programs, they should not constrain or undermine

initiatives. Women's empowerment is the need of the hour where women can become economically independent and self-reliant; where they can fight their own fears and go out in the world fearless; where they can snatch their rights from the clutches of men and they don't have to ask for them; where women have good education, good career, ownership of property and above all where they have freedom of choice and also the freedom to make their own decisions.

CONCLUSION-

Gender equality can be promoted by diversified standards in various platforms like making education gender-sensitive; Promoting gender-sensitive movies; Educating families in underprivileged communities about the importance of educating the girl child; Promotion of girl child education; Saying no to child marriage; Encouraging women to take leadership roles; Providing women and girls equal access and opportunities to education, healthcare, and jobs, Encouraging female participation in decision-making processes etc.

Although progress has been made on various imperative fronts but a much bigger endeavour is needed to embark upon the blueprints of violence yawning

into many societies in order to prevent it from perpetuating across generations. Therefore, collecting more data and information is a significant first step. It is pertinent to note that men and women are the two halves of a perfect whole. Strength is borne of their union their separation results in weakness. Each has what the other does not have. Each completes the other, and is completed by other.

Therefore, the victimized gender are with a hope that the participative democracy, in times to come, in cooperation with pains and labours of both women and men, would set off the elucidation of hitches pertaining to gender inequality and would anticipate towards a cherished hallucination of a true modern society which will fulfill its accomplishment and contemplation.

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