

Role Of Media In Elimination Of Gender Discrimination

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ABSTRACT

The aim of Media is providing lot of information to the masses in the form of advertisements, entertainments, and news through different medium like electronic media (TV, films, internet), and print media (newspapers, magazines, newsletters, brochures, posters, banners, and billboard). The media providing information that is collected and edited based on the media guiding principals of accuracy, fairness and balanced representation. Through these medium, the media shapes the ideas, behavior and concepts of general public's. Media is playing a vital role in changing behavior and attitudes of people. Nowadays everyone is affecting through media. However it can be said that level can be differ. It can be said that media has power to create awareness in society. By shaping public opinions, personal perception and personal beliefs, media influences the process of socialization and shapes ideology and thinking.

Keywords: Gender discrimination: women- men, media, anti-discrimination laws

INTRODUCTION

In India, discriminatory attitude towards men and women have existed for generations and affect the lives of both genders. Although the constitution of India has granted men and women equal rights, gender disparity still remains. Gender discrimination violates human rights. These are mostly seen in family land sharing among sisters and brothers. There is specific research on gender discrimination mostly in favor of men over women. Due to a lack of objective research on gender discrimination against men, it is perceived that it is only women who are suffering [1].

Women are perceived to be disadvantaged at work [2]. Indian laws on Rape, Dowry and Adultery have women's safety at heart, but these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA: A REALITY CHECK

Over the past century there has been much to rejoice about the positive development of women in India: increased visibility of women in the public sphere, closing of gender gaps in primary and secondary school enrolment, the presence of women in the labor force across international borders, and lower fertility rates. In addition, women's organizations have been able to raise issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women, and inequality of power in gender relations, and make these the pivotal issues of debate in national and global arenas. Yet these achievements

have not eliminated, nor decreased, gender discrimination or patriarchy. Rather, in some cases, secular trends have reinforced patriarchal positions, says Kalpana Sankar, chief executive of HandinHand, a Tamil Nadubased non governmental organization, which aims to eliminate poverty by creating jobs. "Being poor and a woman is doubly crippling. Given the constraints faced by poor women, any developmental approach for providing assistance needs to consider their reality."

TAKING CHARGE

The focus in previous Indian government, development programmes and projects has been on economic activities. That helped poor rural women in their daily struggle to feed, clothe and shelter their families. But now a more holistic approach may be needed.

"Women have to be considered as equal participants in shaping the future society in India," [3]. "It is not enough for poor women to earn more; She must have control over her earnings in order to continue to be productive. She must experience the benefits of that increased income. For many women, the process will involve confronting established social norms and hence the emphasis on striving for social change". Advances made in social legislation and the relative ease with which some Indian women have secured legal and political equality, entered professions and occupied positions of power has led to the perception that, unlike in some Asian societies, the status accorded to women in India is very high. In reality, six decades after independence and after five decades of planned development, the position of women has worsened considerably in every sphere with a declining gender ratio, a declining economic participation rate and growing gaps in life expectancy and mortality rates between men and women.

GLASS CEILINGS THAT NEED TO BE BROKEN

It is needed to empower women to avoid perpetuating women as second-class citizens in the house, community, society, religion, politics and culture. "Even loans are denied to single women and they are marginalized to a large extent even among the literate community. Women are not perceived as successful even if they make progress in their careers if they are not able to manage their home front. Women are scrutinized much more than men: mistakes committed by women and women leaders are blown out of proportion in comparison to their male counterparts". Women are also generally viewed in their reproductive roles, taking care of their families, without political rights being taken into consideration. "Citizenship has for long been a largely male domain with women firmly embedded in cultural institutions in the realm of family and community. The impact of political institutions of law and citizenship on women has been largely overlooked, as has been the manner in which these institutions are regulated and controlled by the state's mechanisms". Consequently women are treated as being "different from men, leading to formulation of policies specific to them" [3].

It is not in India where there is a place for gender discrimination but it is happening all over the world:

- In Guatemala, two women are killed every day. This country ranks third for murders of women in the world
- Bolivia has the highest rates of domestic violence in Latin America
- In Mexico, more than 1,800 women were victims of feminicide in 2011
- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by their partners
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every 6 hours by her partner
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in 2007 in dowry-related murders
- Between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls were raped in the Rwandan genocide in 1994
- Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in European Union countries are victims of sexual harassment in the workplace
- Women and girls are 80 per cent of the people trafficked annually. 79% are trafficked for sexual exploitation (UN, 2011; Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio, 2011) [4].

Discrimination against women can be categorized into three stages:

INFANCY TO CHILDHOOD

Both women and men are important for reproduction. The cultural construct of Indian society which reinforces gender bias against men and women, with varying degrees and variable contexts against the opposite sex, [5] has led to the continuation of India's strong preference for male children. Female infanticide and sexselective abortion is adopted and strongly reflects the low status of Indian women. Census 2011 shows decline of girl population (as a percentage to total population) under the age of seven, with activists estimating that eight million female fetuses may have been aborted in the past decade [6]. The 2005 census shows infant mortality figures for females and males are 61 and 56, respectively, out of 1000 live births [7], with females more likely to be aborted than males due to biased attitudes. A decline in the child sex ratio (0–6 years) was observed with India's 2011 census reporting that it stands at 914 females against 1,000 males, dropping from 927 in 2001 the lowest since India's independence [8]. The demand for sons among wealthy parents is being satisfied by the medical community through the provision of illegal service of fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion. The financial incentive for physicians to undertake this illegal activity seems to be far greater than the penalties associated with breaking the law [9].

CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD AND EDUCATION

Education is not widely attained by Indian women. Although literacy rates are increasing, female literacy rate lags behind the male literacy rate. Literacy for females stands at 65.46%, compared to 82.14% for males [10]. An underlying factor for such low literacy rates are parents' perceptions that education for girls are a waste of resources as their daughters would eventually

live with their husbands' families and they will not benefit directly from the education investment [11].

ADULTHOOD AND ONWARDS

Discrimination against women has contributed to gender wage differentials, with Indian women on average earning 64% of what their male counterparts earn for the same occupation and level of qualification [12]. Discrimination against women has led to their lack of autonomy and authority. Although equal rights are given to women, equality may not be well implemented. In practice, land and property rights are weakly enforced, with customary laws widely practiced in rural areas. Women do not own property under their own names and usually do not have any inheritance rights to obtain a share of parental property [1].

DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS MEN

Although socially women have been at a disadvantage, Indian laws highly favor women. If a husband commits adultery he will be jailed, but a woman cannot be jailed for adultery and neither will she be punished by the courts. There is no recognition of sexual molestation of men and rarely the police stations lodge a First Information Report (FIR) ; Men are considered the culprit by default even if it was the woman that committed sexual abuse against men. Women can jail husband's family for dowry related cases by just filing an FIR. The law IPC 498A demands that the husband's family be considered guilty by default, unless proven otherwise, in other words it implements the doctrine of 'guilty unless proven innocent' defying the universally practiced doctrine of 'innocent until proven guilty'. According to one source, this provision is much abused as only four percent of the cases go to the court and the final conviction rate is as low as two percent [13].

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION

Eliminating discrimination from an organization is a challenge but one that can improve the chances that won't have to battle former employees in court or devise creative ways to recruit candidates. Developing an equal employment opportunity policy establishes a foundation for an organization's mission and philosophy on mutual respect, but it's only a start. Commitment to that policy requires the unwavering support of the organization's highest level of leadership, which trickles down to managers, supervisors and staff [14].

ROLE OF MEDIA IN ELIMINATING GENDER DISCRIMINATION

However, the media has contributed more for elimination of gender discrimination in society by hitting at change in attitude through sensitising the population. It has highlighted various cases and in a manner which became the talk of the town, like those of Dr Shazia Khalid in Sui (Balochistan), Ayesha in Lahore, Shaista Alimani in Sukkur, and Mukhtaran Mai in Muzaffargarh. Change of attitude of the male population towards women needs to be eulogised in the media [15].

- To provide truthful and informative stories, reports, programs, advertisements and films

for the benefit of the public.

- To develop industry awareness and commitment to its social responsibilities, including the promotion of values.

Examples from Fiji, India and other countries show how positive media coverage of gender issues can effectively contribute to the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls. Lakshmi Krupa of Gijnapalle of the University of Madras mentioned the positive use of television in India: "The country's PBS - public broadcasting system, Doordarshan, and All India radio have its main motto as Information, Education and Entertainment. True to living up to the spirit of this, they have launched round the clock information and education channels. They run almost 75% of shows for the welfare and improvement of the society with more than 15 channels in different Indian languages. They run special shows on girl child's welfare, women's welfare schemes and talks from NGO heads, and interviews of women achievers, and so on and so forth. One of the most successful campaigns has been their use of a cartoon image of a girl child to address several social issues. It is also to be noted that this is a central autonomous body receiving funds from the government and hence does not frankly care about profit as such. This is a great disadvantage with commercial TV and radio channels, because they feel it is a waste of resource and precious airtime." NGOs should actively engage with public TV stations to advocate for girls' empowerment, as well as with private and commercial stations. Commenting on the role of media, Linda MacDonald of Canada wrote about the importance of public broadcasts including messages on gender equality: "There need to be direct media messages that tell girls that there is gender inequality in the world. Just like racism and other hate crime ads we see, I think we need just as direct messages about gender inequality. They could be written in the positive but still direct. Statements such as: All girls in the world have human rights even if they are not treated as such – or: Girls are equal persons in the world. These messages could be on TV during daytime children's shows and be posted in schools."

Anti-discrimination laws

Australia has obligations under a number of international human rights treaties to take measures to eliminate discrimination including on the basis of age, race, sex, pregnancy, marital status and disability.

The Commonwealth Government has implemented some of these obligations through legislation such as the:

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*

The Law Council monitors the implementation of Australia's human rights obligations through

these Acts and responds to legislative reviews or related matters.

The current Commonwealth anti-discrimination regime provides an important legislative framework for promoting equality in Australia and contains many positive features that operate to protect against certain forms of discrimination in certain circumstances. Despite these features, many individuals and groups within the Australian community experience discrimination, and the notion of substantive equality remains, at least for some, still out of reach. Substantive equality allows different groups to be treated differently so that they can enjoy their human rights equally. It differs from formal equality, which is achieved if the law treats all people the same way. Formal equality may not address discrimination as it does not take into account disadvantage experienced by different groups.

The current Commonwealth regime also deals with different grounds of discrimination in different ways. Four grounds of discrimination - sex, age, disability and race - are dealt with under the specific Acts listed above while other more limited protections are provided under the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth). This results in a confused and fragmented scheme, which is difficult to use.

For these reasons the Law Council supports reforms to the current Commonwealth anti-discrimination regime that make it easier to access and understand, improve its capacity to address all forms of discrimination, promote substantive equality, and that implement Australia's international obligations in this area. For these reasons, the Law Council supports the consolidation of the existing Commonwealth discrimination laws in to a single Act, provided that this process preserves or enhances existing protections against discrimination and improves the ability of the regime to promote substantive equality, as well as removing the regulatory burden on business [16].

CONCLUSIONS

- Media creates awareness about sexual harassment at the workplace, and the need to combat it. This can be done through posters, handouts, pamphlets, bulletins, notices, badges (something like 'Zero Tolerance Zone for Sexual Harassment').
- They should conduct workshops to promote gender sensitivity among union members.
- They should conduct workshops in self-defense and personality development in order to boost the confidence of women union members.
- They should set up Gender Councils to take the issue forward. Support any woman who complains about sexual harassment, and assist her in pursuing justice.

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