Research Article

The Role of Media in Promoting Gender Equality and Facilitating Effective Communication

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between gender equality and effective communication is crucial for promoting inclusivity and advancement in modern society. It examines the significant impact of media in advancing gender equality and enhancing effective communication. The media significantly influences public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding gender roles and stereotypes. The study examines multiple aspects, including the depiction of gender in media, the representation of women in leadership positions, and the impact of media messages on societal norms and communication behaviors. This study aims to analyze the portrayal of gender roles in media, investigate the correlation between media consumption and communication patterns across genders, and evaluate the representation of women in leadership roles within media organizations. The study will include an extensive literature analysis to establish a foundation in the current academic debate and a brief survey to collect quantitative data on media consumption habits and perspectives on gender roles from a varied participant demographic. This study elucidates the pivotal role of media in influencing gender equality and communication dynamics, thereby contributing to creating a more equitable media environment that promotes inclusive discourse among all genders.:

INTRODUCTION

Media, the fourth pillar of democracy, is a powerful social watchdog (Kumar & Singh, 2019). It reflects society's behaviour and reports communal activities. The mix of media has greatly increased its potential to shape public opinion and values. The most important mass communication medium in India is television, which shapes public opinion. Media participation builds democracy on broadly shared knowledge of political, social, and economic concerns. Development communication is a new sector where the media is crucial to national development. Social news is usually secondary to political and economic news. Modern circumstances downplay violence against women and other gender inequalities (Mini, 2023).

Media is essential for information dissemination and societal transformation, making it essential for gender equality (Maryani et al., 2018). Community radio has raised awareness and empowered Rwandan communities by highlighting gender issues and gender-based violence (Donatien & Kriti, 2021). Social internet allows people to discuss gender norms and enlighten society. Many media campaigns promote social action and community mobilization to address gender-based violence and women's rights (Arnold, 2024).

Traditional (TV, radio, print) and digital media are essential for sharing knowledge and transforming society, which is essential for gender equality. Community radio in Rwanda has raised awareness of gender-based violence and empowered locals. The Indian state has also utilized the media to promote girls' education through schemes like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" and enhance narratives about female children's rights. Information may now reach more people thanks to digital media. Social media allows individuals to debate gender issues, which can disrupt

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gender norms and give them the courage to write about their own experiences, like in the MeToo campaign in India. Indeed, especially today (Thajaswini, 2020).

Digital media made information more accessible (Zitmane, 2023). Sharing personal experiences, connecting with others, and defying gender norms are possible on social media. In India, #MeToo has garnered support for sharing sexual harassment stories and discussing consent and workplace safety. These internet platforms' ability to create debate spaces has changed gender discourse in India (Liu, 2023).

Effective communication, including gender advocacy, requires media. The media's depiction of women and gender roles shapes society's views on gender equality. Studies show that mainstream media reinforces gender stereotypes and harmful social conceptions (Kumar & Singh, 2019). However, good images of women and diverse gender roles can catalyze change and provide a reference point for youngsters, emphasizing the need for media practice that prioritises diversity and equity (Boberg, 2021).

The media may promote gender equality, but problems remain. Many criticize the mainstream Indian media for reinforcing gender stereotypes through patriarchal narratives and skewed depictions of women and their duties. Women are often represented in subservient roles, normalising gender-based discrimination and violence (Thajaswini, 2020). Media coverage of gender problems is dominated by one perspective due to the uneven proportion of women in authority (Zitmane, 2023).

The rise of grassroots movements on social media has changed gender discourse and communication (Arnold, 2024). Twitter (Now X), Facebook, and other channels have united splintered audiences to demand gender rights by sharing tales and experiences. These channels have also made a difference in raising awareness of women and marginalized concerns beyond mainstream media (Donatien & Kriti, 2021).

With a broad and diverse audience, Indian television is one of the most powerful and successful medium. Since it is broad and accessible, it shapes public perception of gender roles and society's attitude toward them. TV soaps, drama, ads, and news reporting reflect society's beliefs and can help change the existing quo with more progressive portrayals. Famous soap operas and series dramas have been condemned for perpetuating gender stereotypes and praised for slowly embracing new views and gender-sensitive depictions (Thajaswini, 2020). The stereotype of the woman as a housewife and man as earner persists, although there is a trend toward empowered women leaders, self-sufficient young women, and gender-equal partnerships.

In-depth analysis, opinion articles, and editorials in newspapers and periodicals affect gender problems public opinion. Gender-based violence, discrimination, and women's rights dominate these sources' coverage. Investigative journalism and editorial positions may strengthen the collective opinion and start a gender equality discourse (Macharia et al., 2024). Women's and youth periodicals cover gender challenges and triumphs, changing society's narrative.

Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+Hotstar, and others have challenged narrative by offering a wide range of genuine, dynamic gender and sexuality characters. These platforms are showing films featuring multi-faceted characters, strong female characters, trans, non-binary characters, and intersectionality analysis. Modern shows and movies emphasize gender flexibility, social justice, and empowerment, which reinforces gender stereotypes. The issue of inconsistent representations persists, with some content perpetuating stereotypes or portraying gender equality in the name of entertainment rather than social impact (Grabmullerova, 2022).

Fast information dissemination and quick response and engagement made online news outlets one of the most potent sources of information, appealing to many audiences. While these sources democratize news consumption, they also risk inaccuracy and sensationalism that might reinforce stereotypes and gender biases (Bodhi et al., 2021). Online material is viral, thus misrepresentations or biased narratives about gender issues can spread across a network, impacting gender discourse and reader views.

Community and regional radio stations are important in rural and semi-urban regions where people may not have access to other media. Radio programming is ideal for promoting gender-sensitive discourses, addressing local gender issues, and empowering women and underprivileged groups through particular messages. A few studies show that community radio programming can raise knowledge of gender-based violence, health, and women's empowerment to mobilize grassroots change (Donatien & Bhuju, 2021). Radio has helped promote conversation and social change across the nation.

Cinema has long dominated culture, shaping gender attitudes. Bollywood, India's largest film industry, has both perpetuated and challenged sexist prejudices. In recent years, movies have explored and broken the stereotype of women as dependent, submissive, and conservative, portraying independent women or diverse gender identities and social justice and equality-themed narratives. Cinema reflects cultural ideals and can encourage viewers to act to achieve their dreams or construct their ideal society.

The problems and potential of different media must be considered when assessing the media's role in gender equality and communication. Change is complicated by natural prejudices and the possibility of propagating narratives that devalue non-mainstream perspectives. Media professionals must be trained to recognise and

manage gender biases in their work to address these concerns, as their actions will greatly impact public perception and discourse on gender equality (Xiaodi et al., 2023).

Gender equality in media requires consumer and producer media literacy. Media education may help people critically evaluate media messages and have meaningful equality debates by raising awareness of gender biases and stereotypes. Media practitioners trained in gender-sensitive reporting will accurately and respectfully portray women, challenge stereotypes and elevate marginalised perspectives (Boberg, 2021).

The media is a challenging but important tool for gender equality and communication in India (Donatien & Kriti, 2021). Dismantling stereotypes, raising awareness of different viewpoints, and using platforms for advocacy will make the media a major partner in equality and justice. A revolutionary media ecosystem that promotes gender equality in India and empowers all people to participate in society requires ongoing research and dynamic connections between media projects, educational institutions, and community groups.

At the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, 189 nations unanimously supported the Beijing Platform for Action, the most comprehensive media gender gap framework. Despite worldwide agreements, media gender equality development has been slow. Progress has been sluggish. All companies and societies must work together to promote gender equality in news and information systems. News highlights gender gaps and promotes change or reinforces prejudices, shaping social views of gender equality. In the Beijing Platform for Action and other global policy frameworks, the international development community emphasizes the media as a tool for gender equality, but journalism gender equality needs improvement (Macharia et al., 2024).

Additionally, the interplay of gender with other social categories including class, race, sexual orientation, and disability clarifies how media depictions affect gender standards. Media dominate or destabilize power relations and hierarchies, which may affect identity development among oppressed groups (Lee et al., 2023; Santoniccolo, 2023). This intersectionality is crucial to understanding how media shapes gender perspectives.

This paper seeks to examine how gender roles are represented in media, examine the correlation between media consumption and gender patterns of communication, and examine how women are represented in management positions in the media houses. Through these observations, the research shall help to gain insight into the crucial role played by media in shaping gender equality and communication patterns and ultimately towards the attainment of a more balanced media scenario, which will support an inclusive dialogue with all genders.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to analyze the connection between patterns of media consumption and perceptions toward the role of media in reinforcing gender equality and effective gender communication. The study also aims at -

- Examine how women in leadership have been depicted in various media outlets, either as television and movies, the print media, advertisements, social media, web news and streaming services.
- Determine statistically significant correlations between certain media use categories and the perceptions of leadership representation in a gendered way.
- Offer suggestions on how they can improve the visibility and accuracy of women's leadership representations in media content and leadership positions in media outfits.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Media's role in gender equality and effective communication in India has been studied using various methods. Some research show the irony between media images and women's experiences. Other works examine how media may empower women and challenge patriarchy.

Indian gender equality in the context of globalization and liberalization is complicated. Globalization's structural adjustment measures may negatively affect women, but the media available to them through expanded, diversified global markets offers a chance to refute patriarchal orientations by providing multiple role models of women (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003). It assumes that media may promote social transformation even in uneven economic conditions. On one side, India saw some government initiatives to bring women to the boardroom, but women's empowerment has remained low, highlighting the need for a larger strategy and media and other interventions (Arthur-Aidoo et al., 2024).

Cornell University associate professor Brook Duffy claims that social media is meritocratic, rewarding the most popular material with likes, followers, and favorites. Real life shows that women's voices are underrepresented in politics, sports, journalism, and education. Social media shapes our imaginations and beliefs. Digital social injustice can also manifest as gender discrimination (Liu et al., 2019).

Media can help women worldwide by amplifying their voices, showing the fight against gender injustice, and providing role models. The research found that campaigns and narratives about women leaders fighting for women's rights and correcting discriminatory behaviors promote gender equality.

Crenshaw (1989) invented the term "intersectionality" to describe how gender, caste, class, sexuality, and disability affect personal perceptions of privilege or marginality. The most popular media in India and elsewhere have neglected

or satirized women from marginalized backgrounds and prioritized upper-caste, cisgender, heterosexual, and able-bodied persons (Bond & Compton, 2015; Lee et al., 2023). LGBTQ+ and low-income voices have been rare and distorted in tale and visual representation.

New web series and indie films that showcase intersectional identities and challenge the ideals of beauty, prosperity, and family are thwarting such powerful narratives (Bond & Compton, 2015; Christian, 2019). To reflect the complex experiences of all women in a patriarchal society, researchers are encouraging the use of intersectional frameworks in content analysis and media production (Bond & Compton, 2015; Lee et al., 2023).

Negative stereotypes, silence, and objectification of women are promoted by the media. Many studies show that conventional media underrepresent women by emphasizing their attractiveness and domesticity over their professional or intellectual achievements. The internet has democratized production. Internet harassment, bullying, and disinformation about women should also be examined (Kausar et al., 2024).

Akhter and Naheed (2014) and Narayana and Ahamad (2016) have advocated for gender equality and rights. Such shows frequently show women in leadership roles after battling for their rights and speaking out against discrimination, promoting gender equality in society. Social media allows women to share their tales and remove prejudices, making the job of a woman more understandable (Kumari, 2024).

Early female communication research examined media depictions of women and their effects on viewers. Gallagher's 1980 and 1985 studies on female stereotypes and gender indoctrination reveal alarming scientific congruence across Western developed nations, East Communist nations, and Southern developing nations. The lack of women in media production and content is obvious, and when they appear, they are stereotyped as passive, submissive, dependent, and preoccupied with a husband, father, son, or authority figure. Rakow (1986) claims that the empirical study design typical of communication work underlies these preconceptions and socialization variables. This might transform important fields of research (Stacey & Thorne, 1985).

Content analysis shows that female characters are usually subordinate, supporting, or ornamental, often reduced to the stereotype of the homemaker, mother, or love interest, while males are given leading, professional, and choice-making roles (Thajaswini, 2020). In film, especially Bollywood, female characters are either virginal and selfless or sensual, whereas male protagonists are powerful and determined (Grabmullerova, 2022). These portrayals shape society expectations and provide compelling scripts about gender performance at a young age. Children absorb them and let them influence their job choices, goals, and self-esteem (Chen & Xiao, 2022).

However, recent years have brought adjustments. Multicultural identities, female empowerment, multifaceted and more realistic TV dramas and movies are featuring numerous marginalized groups (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). Single parenthood, LGBTQ+ identities, and women in business are being explored by various series and indie films. They are exceptions in a patriarchal world with limited diversity, hence conventional media material and action to improve the situation should be prioritized (Santoniccolo et al., 2023; Grabmullerova, 2022).

Research shows that the media may influence violence against women by showing males in positive roles in campaigns. These roles include supporters, change agents, and active masculinity redefining agents, according to Lapsansky et al. (2021). This approach aims to raise public awareness of gender relations and provide education and information platforms. Blog lectures and audio podcasts have raised awareness of male violence against women and suggested solutions (Ajibade, 2014).

Heilman and Caleo (2018) define gender equality as equal rights, just awards, opportunities, authority, and status for everyone. It emphasizes violence prevention and fair access to resources in politics, community, relationships, and homes. In a culture that helps both genders grasp work, healthcare, bank loan, and educational options and how to use them with needed abilities, gender equality will be achieved. Equity resources should be offered to both genders regardless of kind. All genders should have enough time and space to move freely and access resources.

Most nations have introduced wage narrowing, promotional advancements, and workplace gender equity legislation. Such initiatives foster an environment where both genders can freely play many roles in society. The UN Foundation (2022) reports that, while the gender pay gap and lack of mentorship opportunities remain obstacles to truly fair gender treatment, some progress has been made toward a more egalitarian future. The PR Council found that women get 87 cents for every dollar men receive in 2021. Inequality has decreased but not eliminated (UN Foundation, 2022).

In a worldwide society, social media must improve global communications. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media apps have revolutionized how individuals and businesses communicate, exchange information, and collaborate across distances (Abu et al., 2024; Saari, 2022).

Political action is covered by the media. Role orientation, which encourages women to do housework, and trends contribute to the underrepresentation of women in Indian politics. Social media have helped promote political gender equality (Soedarwo et al., 2019). Digital media and smartphones affect communication and political discourse in India, and new media can revolutionize mobilization and political engagement

(Darshan & Suresh, 2019).

Digital and social media have given marginal voices and gender equality movements new places, unlike traditional media. Millions joined #MeToo and #TimesUp, indicating that social media might elevate marginalized voices (Liu, 2023; Yin & Zhang, 2024). These initiatives educate individuals and compel institutions to address sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

However, limitations hinder social media's fair playing field potential. On one side, encouraging women journalists, activists, and regular users to utilize social media to avoid editorial gatekeeping and spread counter-narratives. Abusing women, feminists, or anybody with opposing views online is extremely cruel. A recent study shows that even exposure to gender representations on social media does not necessarily dismantle prejudices; in some situations, discriminatory discourses adapt and remain, proving the restricted scope of technology's influence in social transformation. These findings suggest that critical reading and systemic accountability for internet media are necessary (Keller et al., 2018; Putri, 2024).

Female representation in headlines, writing, editing, executive positions, and ownership is increasingly thought to lead to more balanced, pluralistic, and innovative media (Ross et al., 2010; Byerly, 2013; Radsch, 2014). Female journalists working with women sources and covering problems relevant to women's lives will help break the cycle of news coverage marginalizing women.

Female presence in media leadership and decision-making is relatively low, notably in India. Most Indian media organizations have less than 20% female top creatives or executives, and wage and opportunity equality are still far from being achieved (Kumari & Siotra, 2023; Urbániková & Čaladi, 2024; Yin & Zhang, 2024). This disparity creates blind spots in news, movies, and advertising, highlighting the need for institutional changes and regulations to promote gender equality in the media.

Some study suggests that gender equality in marketing has improved, while others point to the pervasiveness of sexism in dominant visual cultures like Bollywood. This discrepancy suggests that media depictions and their consequences on prejudice and social attitudes should be examined more. As media portrayals evolve, society becomes more conscious and vice versa (Mukhopadhyay & Seymour, 2021). In tackling gender inequities, community radio and science communication help communicate female agency (Barata et al., 2023).

According to McQuail (2009), news media facilitate citizen interaction and serves as a deliberative public arena. A lot of studies show that the media stereotypes and underrepresents women, minorities, and marginalized groups. Not having a venue for women to express themselves is another sign of not being completely democratic. News media are activists who expose power abuses and alert the world to activities that big institutions discredit. News media cooperation encourages collaboration, which allows journalists and government authorities to communicate during emergencies (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021). Media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic implies that more needs to be done to educate the public about the effects of their issue and incorporate gender-friendly measures into response plans (McQuail, 2009).

A recent McKinsey & Company survey shows gender gap in most media businesses, especially in media and entertainment. According to this poll, the biggest issues are the lack of women in senior leadership roles and discrimination that harms women's workplaces (Blake-Beard et al., 2020).

Gender equality is not reached in social activities, economic directions, and the media. It requires understanding and a positive affirmation of equality and non-discrimination values and the political will and policy initiatives needed to implement them. Media have a role in shaping our identities and determining where we fit in society, thus they should challenge gender stereotypes and prejudice (Williams et al., 2000).

Experience demonstrates that mediated political discourse must include more women, both symbolic and substantive democratically (Adcock 2010: 135; Ross 2010). However, no medium can promote gender equality or democracy until it becomes one of its core ideals (Byerly, 2013). Holtz-Bacha (2023) suggests that media independence, pluralism, and democracy can enable gender equality.

Gender-based ICT use and representation transcend beyond India (Montiel, 2015). This encompasses content and representation, women's access to media and ICT decision-making, gender mainstreaming communication policy, and women's media and ICT access and consumption. Tech, social media, and gender mainstreaming spillover capitalization have been important in terrorism and violent extremism rhetoric (Speckhard, 2021). The studies also assess the impact of social media on users' well-being and emphasize the need for a survey on media's social and psychological consequences (Bodhi et al., 2021).

Media literacy is crucial for viewers and producers to critically examine and reject gender prejudice in media. Training less media-literate individuals to remake preconceptions, recognize bias and misinformation, and challenge passive consumption makes them active participants (Puchner et al., 2015; McDougall et al., 2018; Mohan & Lee, 2022). Gender-sensitive reporting and media production programmes help journalists, editors, and content makers reduce stereotypes and centre marginalised voices, especially when covering gender-based violence and workplace discrimination (Boberg, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Several recent interventions show that media literacy can change perceptions, improve gender justice, and improve the precision and

sensitivity of representations in all media, including news, entertainment, and social media. Finally, decent and fair communications need media-literate cultures.

Despite development in the field, the extant corpus of scholarly research still shows certain trends, and multidimensional gaps may still hinder media gender equality and social justice. The most pressing issue is consumer media portrayal, narratives, and thematic prioritizing of women and minorities, as well as their underrepresentation in creative leadership and decision-making roles. This systemic unfairness undermines conventional depictions and limits viewpoint variety, strengthening societal bias.

Much research and conversation continue to focus on social media and its complex impact on society. Some social media platforms are microcosms of democracy, while others reinforce stereotyped images and lies. This contradictory effect of social media underpins a multifaceted view of its effects and specialized treatments.

Media literacy is in demand because it helps consumers and producers to examine, analyze, and challenge media messages using critical competencies. This need is increased by an increased awareness of how intersectional frameworks can help achieve the paradigm in understanding inequality. These analysis tools can help understand the interconnectedness of diverse social categories like gender, race, class, and sexuality. Such challenges require multifaceted solutions. Future study should prioritize intersectionality as an analytic framework and proactive media literacy initiatives that empower consumers and media creators. Institutional meaning transformation should also change media production, policy, and leadership.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The connection between media, gender equality and communication is an understandably complicated and multidimensional area of knowledge. To be able to explore this dynamic, a powerful theoretical framework is necessary. Feminist Media Theory and Social Cognitive Theory are among the most popular and influential theories of studying such processes. Both provide different explanations of how the media serves as a mirror on the one hand and a shaper of gender norms on the other.

Feminist Media Theory: Deconstructing Power and Representation

Feminist Media Theory refers to this type of analysis as utilizing the construction of media relations and media practices to reinforce, build, or subvert the gender form of power in society. This theory holds that media are not passive transmitters of knowledge; quite on the contrary, media materials, institutional policies, and the dynamics of production often reflect and reinforce patriarchal Standards (van Zoonen, 1994).

This theory points out the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies of women in the media. These consist of them being underrepresented in front of the camera (on the character/expert front and as subjects) as well as being underrepresented backstage (as producers, directors, and journalists). More to the point, it draws attention to the lack of women as figures with authority to make decisions and manage the media agencies and their priorities on stories and angles shaping their priorities.

Social Cognitive Theory: Explaining Learning and Influence

The Social Cognitive Theory is the psychological theory that is used to explain how individuals gain knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours as an outcome of observing other more effective models in the media (Bandura, 2001). According to this theory, people learn behaviour, attitudes and emotional reactions by observing, mostly without personal experience. In this respect, as relating to media, it implies that viewers, especially the youth, acquire knowledge through the role models they see on TV.

The Social Cognitive theory can play a role in achieving the goals of the research, which include the determination of the relationship that exists between the use of the media and the patterns of communication, and the determination of how the media will be able to motivate the young people to become leaders.

The combination of Feminist Media Theory and social cognitive Theory offers a strong and very detailed analytical framework. Feminist Media Theory assists in determining the ideological supports and structural prejudices in the media content in answering the question: what is presented and why. The Social Cognitive Theory then comes in to give this tool of how the effects of this content reach the audience, with the question being how these representations are learnt and internalized, then finally forming the individual and societal behaviour. This synergy will provide the research with possibilities to present a more nuanced account about the role of media, rather than as a reflection of society, but as an agent in employing perceptions, strengthening or breaking stereotypes, and contributing to the goal of gender equality.

METHODOLOGY

The research design was a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design that was conducted to understand the association between media consumption habits and ideas about gender equality and representation of leadership in different media outlets. An informative and convenience sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample of 80 respondents, who were of varied enough age, gender, level of education and profession to get a wide reflection of the views. The data was obtained using an online survey conducted using Google Forms, which made

it accessible and convenient to respond to the survey, no matter the geographical area. The questionnaire had four parts, namely the first one (demographic details), the second one (the patterns of media use, frequency, and length of exposure to television, social media, films, print media, streaming services, advertising, and online news), the third one (engagement behaviours, including commenting, sharing, liking and the active seeking of varying opinions and gender-equality accessible content), and the fourth one (perceptions or beliefs about media capacity to promote gender communication, care about gender-based violence (GBV), offer a voice to various political positions, and support intercultural communication. Statistical tools that were used to analyze the data were - Spearman's rank-order, Chi-square tests of independence, and Cramer's V. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to estimate the magnitude and the direction of the associations between ordinal variables, and Chi-square tests of independence were used to estimate the statistically significant relationships between the frequencies of use of social media and the portrayal of the leader across the various, differing media. The magnitude of these associations was measured based on effect sizes using Cramer's V. The analytical method allowed a reliable study of the quantitative trends and their implication toward explaining the presence of media engagement as a factor that informs perceptions on gender communication and leadership representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study were incorporated by combining the statistical interpretations and theoretical knowledge that answered the research aims. The quantitative data were analyzed to determine the association between various media consumption patterns, active engagement behaviour and the perception regarding the role of media in promoting gender equality, in gender-sensitive communication, and in the depiction of women leaders in a leadership role on different platforms. The results presentation is tabulated according to three major analytical outputs Spearman rank-order correlations to determine the association between media engagement behaviours and measures of beliefs (Table 1), chi-square tests with Cramer V values to determine the relationship between frequency of social media use and level of perceived leadership representation by media type (Table 2), and descriptive means comparisons to describe variation in how leadership portrayal is rated by media type according to frequency of social media use (Table 3). These statistical data are interpreted in the light of the theoretical frameworks mentioned previously, that is, Social Cognitive Theory and Feminist Media Theory, to contextualize the findings in the general discourse in academia on the role of media in reinforcing or challenging gender norms. By so doing, the section does

not just report statistically significant patterns but also makes a description of their social meaning, which in this case represents the interaction between active media engagement and the presence of women leaders in various communication samples.

Analysis

Table 1 presents Spearman correlation coefficients (ρ) measuring the relationship between media engagement behaviours and beliefs about media's role in promoting gender equality and communication. Positive ρ values indicate that variables tend to increase together, while negative values suggest an inverse relationship. Results show that active media interactions (comments, likes, shares) are positively linked to the belief that media fosters gender communication ($\rho = 0.226$, $p = 0.044$). Participants with more interaction were more likely to see media as promoting gender-sensitive communication, with only a 4.4% chance that this is due to random variation. Some correlations are based on smaller sample sizes due to survey item design. For example, seeking different views is positively associated with believing media offers solutions to gender-based violence (GBV) ($\rho = 0.333$, $p = 0.002$). Intentional exposure to gender-equality content correlates with beliefs that the media encourages intercultural communication, provides a platform for diverse political views, and aids in understanding GBV. No significant positive links were found between overall media use hours and these beliefs, though a near-significant negative correlation suggests that the way media is used might matter more than the amount of exposure.

Analysis

Table 2 reports the chi-square (χ^2) results, which test whether two categorical variables are related. In this case, it examines the link between social-media use frequency and perceptions of women in leadership across different media platforms. Significant χ^2 values across all seven platforms indicate that responses are not independent, meaning responses are related to other variables. P-values range from 0.0009 to 0.0276, suggesting less than a 3% chance these findings are random. Degrees of freedom (df) represent the number of categories compared. Cramer's V (φc), between 0 and 1, measures the strength of relationships—moderate correlations (0.30–0.35) are typical for social sciences. Notably, online news ($\chi^2=39.487$, $p=0.0009$, $\varphi c=0.351$) and movies ($\chi^2=39.075$, $p=0.0011$, $\varphi c=0.349$) show the strongest links, indicating social media use modestly correlates with viewing women in leadership roles more positively.

Analysis

Table 3 presents the mean perceived leadership scores (scale of 1 = "Never" to 5 = "Always") across seven media platforms—television, newspapers/magazines, movies, social media, advertising, streaming, and digital news—divided into social media usage frequency groups:

Table 1: Spearman Correlations Between Media Engagement Variables and Beliefs About Media's Role

Predictor	Outcome	N	ρ	p-value
	Belief: Media promotes gender communication (Yes=2/ Maybe=1/No=0)	40	0.003	0.9876
Daily hours (midpoint)	Belief: Media addresses GBV	40	-0.29	0.0694
	Belief: Media provides platform for diverse voices in political discourse	40	0.119	0.466
	Belief: Media facilitates intercultural communication	40	0.02	0.9028
	Belief: Media promotes gender communication (Yes=2/ Maybe=1/No=0)	80	0.226	0.044
Active engagement (1=Never→5=Always)	Belief: Media addresses GBV	80	0.197	0.08
	Belief: Media provides platform for diverse voices in political discourse	80	0.184	0.1015
	Belief: Media facilitates intercultural communication	80	0.218	0.0519
	Belief: Media promotes gender communication (Yes=2/ Maybe=1/No=0)	80	-0.072	0.5244
Seeking diverse perspectives (1→5)	Belief: Media addresses GBV	80	0.333	0.0026
	Belief: Media provides platform for diverse voices in political discourse	80	0.094	0.4073
	Belief: Media facilitates intercultural communication	80	0.093	0.4128
	Belief: Media promotes gender communication (Yes=2/ Maybe=1/No=0)	80	0.023	0.8421
Seeking gender-equality content (1→5)	Belief: Media addresses GBV	80	0.327	0.0031
	Belief: Media provides platform for diverse voices in political discourse	80	0.231	0.0392
	Belief: Media facilitates intercultural communication	80	0.229	0.0413

Never, Rarely, Often, and Always. Generally, respondents who often use these media tended to perceive female leadership more frequently, with ratings increasing from Never to Often, then plateauing for Always users. For example, in newspapers/magazines, Often users rated 3.636, while Never users rated 2.250. Similar patterns occur in social media and streaming. Interestingly, Always users show high ratings but slightly lower than Often users, possibly due to content saturation or selectivity. Leadership visibility scores in movies and online news are lowest among Never and Rarely users, indicating a link between low social media use and low perceptions of female leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Media producers should prioritize diversity and intentional content creation. This means assuring tokenistic representation of women leaders and multidimensional representation of women in diverse genres and media. Leadership depictions must break gender preconceptions and portray women making

Table 2: Chi-square Tests - Social-media Frequency × Perceived Leadership Representation by Platform

Platform	(χ^2)	df	N	p-value	φc
Movies	39.075	16	80	0.0011	0.349
TV shows	29.738	16	80	0.0194	0.305
Newspapers/Magazines	29.8	16	80	0.0191	0.305
Advertisements	28.486	16	80	0.0276	0.298
Social media (platform)	29.745	16	80	0.0194	0.305
Online news platforms	39.487	16	80	0.0009	0.351
Streaming services	35.892	16	80	0.003	0.335

Table 3: Mean Perceived Leadership Score by Social-media Frequency and Platform

Frequent usage of social media	Movies	TV shows	Newspapers/ Magazines	Advertisements	Social media (platform)	Online news platforms	Streaming services
Always	3.0	2.667	2.917	3.083	3.083	3.0	2.917
Often	3.273	3.091	3.636	2.818	3.455	3.273	3.455
Sometimes	2.68	2.84	2.76	2.84	2.92	2.4	2.0
Rarely	2.2	2.15	1.85	2.05	2.35	1.75	1.95
Never	1.667	2.333	2.25	2.5	2.25	2.083	2.167

political, business, cultural, and grassroots decisions.

- Strategic use of high-engagement digital channels, such as social media and streaming, is essential for spreading the progressive gender narrative. Campaigns must encourage audience interaction, sharing, and gender-equality discourse.
- Prevent oversaturation and repetition of leadership depictions, especially among those who use media often. Too much exposure to similar tales can standardize representations, making them less interesting. They should include fresh representations, tales, and leaders to oppose this. Algorithmic recommendation algorithms on online platforms may be changed to emphasize content diversity, exposing viewers to a variety of leadership portrayals.
- Traditional media, such as TV, print, and advertising, remain effective, but digital areas require tailored interventions. Policymakers may improve diversity by enforcing gender parity in content and production leadership. Progressive openness would encourage authorities to cooperate with the industry.
- Unifying Social Cognitive Theory and Feminist Media Theory may bridge the gap between theory and practice in media literacy programs. Armed with knowledge of how pictures shape views, audiences can demand truthful, balanced, and uplifting portrayals of women leaders. Media practice reform and audience education have the greatest potential to alter and include media communications.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how different media outlets promote gender parity, gender-sensitive communication, and women's leadership in diverse circumstances. Seeking gender-equality content, participating in debates, and investigating perspectives were common active and deliberate behaviors connected to improved attitudes about the media's potential to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes.

Best practices for gender equity in media portrayals should focus on more varied and realistic female leaders, especially in online interactive spaces. This should also study strategies to promote active critical consumption instead of passive reception and leverage the media's transformational power to change public views and improve all-encompassing communication.

Future study might examine the longterm impacts of engagement patterns, algorithmic content curation, and cross-cultural differences in media's effect on gender attitudes. Theory and empirical data confirmed previous arguments that media either reproduces and enforces gendered norms or subverts them and that media creators and distributors must influence and focus it on equality and inclusion.

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