

A study of impact of Sri Lankan media on women's moral

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Abstract

Woman is one of the decisive factors of the existence of the society. The modern woman has stepped forward economically, politically and socially compared to the women in conventional social systems. It is doubtful whether the woman in the contemporary society is respected by the society though it is said that woman deserves a significant place in the society. The scholars have stated that there's no reduction in cases of female violence even though there are variations in the ways women being exploited. Accordingly here it is examined how it affects the Sri Lankan woman in an era where a social criticism has emerged on the contemporary women being subjected to media related violence.

Data were collected initially through interviews and questionnaires conducted among selected fifty women in Homagama Divisional Secretarial Division in the District of Colombo based on random sample system under the three platforms; newspapers, TV advertisements and films out of the modes of mass media platforms in Sri Lanka and were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Accordingly this research investigated the nature and various aspects of media that harm the morality of Sri Lanka woman influence through TV, advertisements, newspapers and films. Moreover, the direct and indirect impact on professional and social life of Sri Lankan woman and the steps that can be taken to overcome the pressure felt on her were studied.

Keywords: woman, society, violence, media

Introduction

The conventional human society has transformed into a free multicultural society after liberalistic economic policies were introduced to Sri Lanka in 1977. In addition, several impacts of the revolution of communication occurred in 1930 were intruded to Sri Lankan society during this period. In spite of the reduction in the haste of this incident due to the civil war took place after 1983, the drastic progression occurred in infrastructure development and the employment in service sector rose high surpassing both employment in agriculture and industrial sectors. Among them media industry was vital and the progression of mass media has already become an essential part in modern culture.

A multitude of responsibilities were attributed on woman though she was confined for domestic chores in the ancient society where male domination prevailed. Men ought to earn for the family. Most women who were imprisoned in houses got the chance to enjoy the privilege of free education as a result of the declaration of free education for women in 1940's. Thereby, women who were employed in small businesses to various higher fields confronted a very busy life. Hence, women become a vigorous character equal to men in every aspect; social, political and cultural in the ancient society and the concept of nuclear family comes to surface making the woman piled up with responsibilities. It was important her to manage household chores, taking care of her husband and children, maintaining social and family interactions while being engaged in her job. The knowledge acquired through new mass media immensely contributed for the woman to overcome her adversities. Contemporary mass media not only influences continuously on all aspects of social life but also creates the coordination among mutual relationships and mutual interaction. It further functions as

active components of human interpellation mechanism and human interpolation mechanism. Therefore, contemporary woman tends to obtain knowledge from newspapers, journals, radio, TV and films.

The knowledge and information are connected to economic and political changes, new inventions and various incidents that happen around is dissemination of information become faster because of the induction of mass media. The time period when the information was interconnected under the influence of mass media is named as the basic social system. The principle feature of this information based social system is the ability of people to receive data more easily and affordably. As a result, the information out of the conventional social boundary was reached for the society and women.

However considering the present entire function of mass media both in the country and other countries around the world; it is evident that the prime concern was given to earn profits rather providing necessary information and knowledge for people. In the present, mass media is found as a profitable enterprise. The owners of media companies raise their profits with the patronage of other trading companies. Those companies choose mass media platform on the basis of the followers gathered around. In order to maintain the demand, mass media often attempts to expand the number of followers. The concept of productive communication process is overshadowed by releasing competitive and enticing contents. The woman has become object for marketing and the ethics of the woman are disturbed because of the reckless function of mass media.

Review of Literature

Researches have been conducted and are being conducted

around the world to investigate how several groups in society are troubled because of the different aspects and function of contemporary mass media.

A research was conducted by Alexandra Ossola in the College of Hamilton, America in 2010 on the effect caused by mass media upon women's physical appearance. According to Alexandra women have gained socially and the attitude over women has been widely concerned during the last few centuries. The cosmetic products related to women are promoted widely through mass media and it has affected young women and their image gravely. Researches and media literacy programmes have been conducted by Arielle Cutler and Levitt Grant constantly in order to find solutions for this situation. She has stressed on media promotions and it was attempted to influence people to buy products based on their knowledge and competency levels. She has further stated that it is important to conduct media literacy programmes to save women from insecurities of media due to the intensive use.

A research has been conducted on display of gender based sociality and the impact of TV channels exhibiting gender base sociality over the existence and dignity of males and females. The method of representing men and women in these channels has been examined. For this one thousand ninety one programmes in one hundred and fifteen channels in Netherland that focussed on both male female parties have been comparatively studied. It was shown that there's a poor participation of women in channels related to women. Both base sociality and women have been similarly discussed in channels related to women. However several other channels have denied the idea to considerate women. Due to this the most violent rebuff to women was displayed by those channels. It was proposed to improve media literacy including watching TV, capturing and understanding the content in order to prevent people making wrong assumptions, initiated from school children. By this research he had further emphasized that whatever the origin of the country is, if the people have media literacy they are capable of avoiding abuses on most media and facing those abuses.

John Barber has conducted an important research in 2011. There he has attempted to investigate about how society is affected because of women's intense exposure in TV channels. Especially TV commercials and visuals that reveal women's figure and sexuality are harmful for the physical and mental health of the woman. He has further stated that woman is employed as a sexual object. As a result women get confronted with several disorders such as low food consumption, lack of self-respect and depression. Using woman and sexuality as an object to promote mass media has become a trend. Music industry is another occasion where women are badly disturbed. In most of the hip-hop dance videos the task given for women is to dance, show aggressiveness in dancing and to seduce men. The dissemination of such wrong behavioral patterns leads the formation of improper social norms crating a false image of women.

Eric Arias has conducted a remarkable research on the impact of mass media over social values in 2016. He had selected Mexico as the field of research. The main target of this research was to observe the role of mass media on exploitation of women. He was intended to present a proposal to create an ethical media culture and render his service and guidance in order to rekindle gender equality.

For this, summaries of researches conducted for studying the function of mass media and violence towards women in sixty countries have been reviewed comparatively. Mexico has been placed on 31st position by this and Germany, Qatar, Russia and Peru have come on the 30th. Similarly, function of mass media in various countries was explained on the basis of application of media on violence against women in Mexico. Through these researches, setting of international standards for media and convincing the authorities for setting accurate standards for media were proposed. Also it is evident that lives of general public are affected by the media and the researches stressed the need to handle media with accountability when influencing women specially.

Another research based on the violence of mass media on gender sociality by Julia T. wood of University of North Carolina in 1989 revealed that the impact felt on male female diversity lead to change the living standard of people. It is found that when mass media is managed by male authority, the woman is oppressed through violence. Currently, the violence in mass media against women has generalized. Thus, the humiliation against women is accepted as a norm in the society. However, the biggest impact of mass media on women is obliteration of the values and dignity of the woman by revealing the sexuality of women to the public through mass media associated with women. Creating phonography has become a massive business. The profit is being made by entertaining the viewers. This trend has caused suffering and barbarism and sexual harassment and rape are generalizes in the society. On the other hand, the woman is not in a position to rise against the unjust as the positions of the authorities are not held by women. Finally, as long as the women's figure is marketed through mass media, the woman is confronted with violence in it.

In 1986, a research by L. Rowell Huesmann dealt with the invasive impact of media violence on women was conducted based on psychological perspective. The core value of the research was the function of mass media on sustainable development. The focus was more on the adverse effects of mass media on women. Capturing of the human community by the mass media had affected the women all over the continent. According to the research, the good or bad effects of young women being exposed to mass media are felt on women after they attend puberty of woman. Self-defense of the ordinary woman in the society is badly affected by the image of woman revealed by the mass media. It is suggested that this tendency can be avoided by setting up sustainable development.

Another research on impact of modern mass media on women conducted by Casey Cipriyani (2015) in USA stated that women are not silent viewers. The research dealt with the report presented by the women's centre for television and cinema industry in America. The report said that women were not silent audience but they are more risky than the film directors. Therefore, woman must not be ridiculed by artists. The facts revealed in this research caused to bring down the above state by 3% in 2016. The woman is manipulated to fulfill the needs of the man in the field of mass media but she is not given the respect that she deserves. In order to get rid of this unjust, it is stressed that woman should be included among the motives that manipulate mass media.

Research Objectives

Programmes dedicated for women, letters, articles, creative writing and advertisements can be seen prominently on all Sri Lankans with special contemplation on Sri Lankan woman. Therefore, woman has been given special emphasis on Cinema, Television Rupavahini, Radio, Newspapers and Journals. In the light of the above situation, this research intends to study the impact of mass media on the ethical life of women in Sri Lanka which possesses a long historical cultural heritage.

Research Methodology

Sampling

Data was collected initially from the newspapers, TV advertisements, films under controlled sample analysis. Daalmans S, Kleemans M, Sadza A conducted researches on exhibiting male and female social status and the impact of the TV channels that aim at male female social discrimination on the dignity of women and their existence based on controlled sample analysis.

Twelve newspapers published for women in 2018 and 2019 and twelve prescribed TV advertisements and ten accredited local and foreign films screened in 2018 and 2019 were selected under random sample method for this research.

Data collection method

Fifty women randomly selected from Homagama Divisional Secretarian Division in the District of Colombo were given questionnaire for collecting data.

Interviews were conducted with the directors of the selected films and selected advertisements to collect data. Through collective observation method quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the selected newspapers, TV advertisements and films and by analyzing their plot, characters, dialogues, picture and sound.

The research by Julia T. Wood of University of North Carolina on “mass media violence on gender base violence” has also completed using this method.

Discussion

The impact of Sri Lankan mass media on the women’s morality was studied under three segments. Accordingly, female characters have been widely focused on when investigating the cinematic media. The woman was reflected on the facets of a mother, sister, girlfriend (lass), a wife and a friend. At the beginning of Sinhala cinema, woman was taken as a character to elaborate religious visions. The cinema producers who concealed the real nature of woman character created an image that conveyed a misunderstanding of woman in the society. When investigating the events, characters, dialogues, pictures/images and voice of the films in the sample, it was found that women had been given more opportunities in most of the episodes of the films. However, it was evident that the woman was purposely ridiculed in the settings of the film. Moreover the plot has been arranged in such a way that the woman was ultimately found guilty and the audience was made to realize that the woman had caused several problems and conflicts in the society. The woman was suppressed in various ways and most often the woman was verbally abused. As can be seen in the sample women were abused physically or mentally to the least extent but they were oppressed physically and mentally simultaneously in many situations.

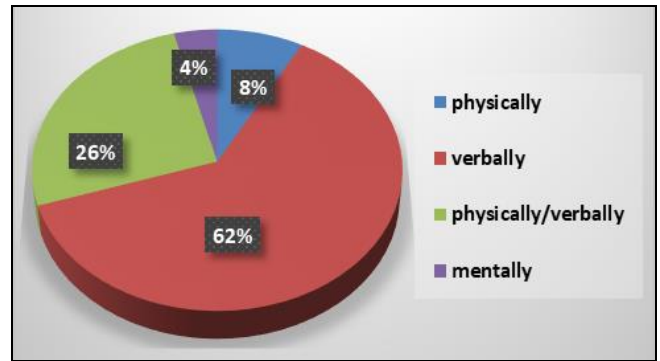


Fig 1: Types of Abuse

The woman is looked down upon as an immature individual by the contemporary cinema. The life experience, the problems she encounters and efforts she makes to get over the obstacles are not deeply discussed in the present cinema industry but she has been labeled as an immature, weak and unconfident individual. There is a tendency that women have been utilized for the scenes that bring out sexuality and phonography related scenes. This has caused the deterioration of her ethical values. The ethical limitations for women in Sri Lanka are so abundant that disclosure of female nudity; semi nudity; sexual activities have made the woman helpless in the society.

Further investigations on the function of mass media and women’s ethics, the current newspapers play a significant role. Among various newspapers, newspapers dedicated for women are in plenty; therefore woman is an object for marketing. Not only her physical appearance but her mannerisms, fashions, beauty culture and physical gestures are highly demanded by the market. Most of the women’s newspapers and majority of newspapers for men carry a nude picture of a woman on the front page. This trend has led to social issues related to the ethics of the woman. Especially, when the content of the women’s newspapers was considered, they often discussed the fields that were conventionally recommended by the society for women. Moreover, the content of such newspapers further directed the women to the tasks endorsed by the society. Although the modern society is developed and the woman is considered to be independent individual in reality she does not possess the independence since she is imprisoned in a demarcated by the social conventions

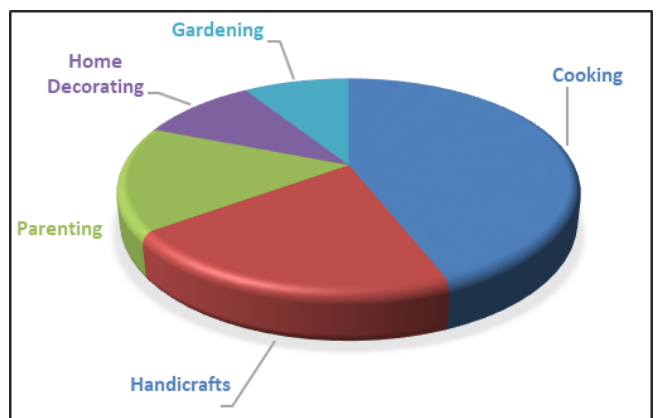


Fig 2: Content of Newspapers

Another aspect that the newspapers bring out problems related to women’s ethics is disclosure and opening

discussions on views covered by the society. Such phenomenon includes love affairs of women, sexual literature problems related to honeymoon and unethical relationships of married women. Also, the irrational solutions presented to those problems are seen as generalized events and this results in creating ethical and cultural problems in the society.

Mass media and ethics of the women are frequently discussed on TV. Among the TV programmes, public advertisements lead to create various problems. Woman is a powerful commercial item in advertising and marketing. That is the woman is an essential part in advertising goods whether the product in the market is associated with the woman or not. Woman is utilized in all advertisements for selling appliances used from kitchen to living room and from radio to electric worker. When marketing products dedicated for men, it is evident that images of semi-nude women have been used. The scope of women in advertising is unlimited. Especially advertising is a platform on which female qualities such as shame and fear are being discussed at length.

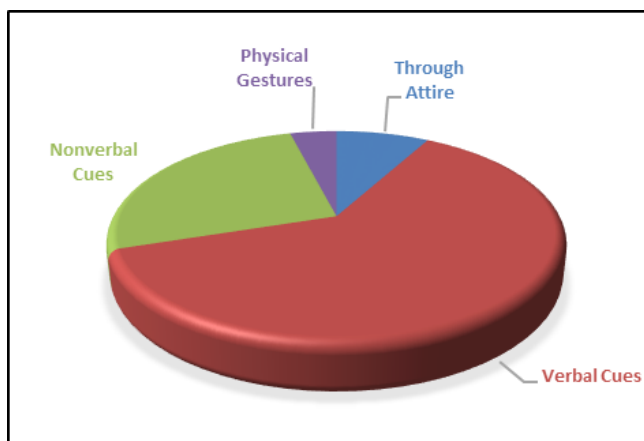


Fig 3: Types of Representation

The woman is used in various ways by the advertisers. The morality of women has been strongly affected invariably by the facets. That is TV advertising consists of fashions bodily gestures and movements, verbal and nonverbal cues that are unsuitable for women's morality. As the women see these kinds of advertisements, they are being generalized. The worst impact of such advertisements is the deterioration of women's dignity and respect.

Conclusion

Although mass media is not the only circumstances where women's morality being deteriorated, mass media contributes to it to a greater extent. Therefore it creates a need to discuss woman's morality. The way woman is depicted by the mass media has caused complex problems. The advertisements associated with women in the newspapers, TV and films seem to present woman in the form of semi-prostitution. When the feeling, life and the thoughts of women are abandoned her figure is marketed at the highest offer in marketing and advertising, oppression by the mass media is unavoidable. Woman is an individual who has esteem and it should be accepted that she is not made to fill a mere gap or she is not an article created for fulfilling needs of others. As a whole, it is confirmed that mass media when performing the information

communication has gradually ignored the basic standards of morality. In order to tame this trend it is necessary to launch mass media literacy programmes, create opportunities for people to influence mass media at government and semi-government levels and to launch regular research on function of mass media. Further it is also necessary to increase the women representation of the management in the media companies. Thereby, the ethics of the woman is safeguarded in mass media.

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