Media's Involvement in Feminism, The Position of Women in the Media Then and Now

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the media has influenced feminist movements. The study employs a methodical literature analysis that covers the years 2003 to 2023 to examine how the media has evolved its support for feminism and how the dynamics of gender representation have changed over time. Through an analysis of old and new media platforms, the research investigates how past limitations and contemporary opportunities influence women's involvement. While new media platforms like social media have empowered women through enhancing awareness and community interaction, traditional media frequently reinforces gender stereotypes and limited women's responsibilities. The study emphasizes how important these forums have become for promoting feminist concerns, getting past censorship, and building international unity. Additionally, the article explores the unique obstacles that Iranian women face in the media's portrayal. This study emphasizes how important it is for feminist studies and new media to come together to shape modern feminist campaigns and discourses.

Keywords: Feminist Studies, Post-Feminism, Emerging Media, Women's Voices.

INTRODUCTION

As an Iranian woman, fighting for basic rights is a daily struggle that every woman faces, consciously or unconsciously. It is vital to understand how women in authoritarian nations fight for their rights and make their presence known in a variety of environments, including streets, schools, and most significantly, the media today, by studying the history of daily resistance (Bayat, 2007). This study provides a deep understanding of the beginnings of women's activities across the world, including Iran. Many artists, including me with my 2017 collection of paintings entitled "zangar" with a strong focus on women's issues, put a lot of effort into playing a role in helping Iranian women.

The aim of this study is to examine the recent "Women, Life, Freedom" movement from the perspective of Iranian women and to justify its successes. First, the role of women in the old media is examined. Then, feminist studies are used to examine how the new media platforms have strengthened

women's voices. Finally, the challenges faced by women in these media, such as gender restrictions and discrimination, are highlighted.

METHODOLOGY

This literature review study followed a systematic approach, beginning with a focused search on feminism along with its emerging themes related to the media's involvement in feminism from 2003 to 2023. This section will describe the search criteria for data collection.

Data Collection

The research's unit of analysis is "Media's Involvement in Feminism, The Position of Women in the Media Then and Now". The articles are collected by looking for peer-reviewed articles in the Google Scholar. These search criteria were applied to find these articles:

- Searchfield: (TX"feminism") AND ("feminism movements") AND ("emerging technologie")

- Limit to: Full Text AND Peer Review

- Publication Date: 2003 to 2023

- Document Type: Journal Article

- Language: English

The results from the above search query are used for this study. The goal was to identify literature from 2003 and ending 2023 on Media's Involvement in Feminism, The Position of Women in the Media Then and Now. The initial search on Google Scholar yieldeS 148 articles. 35 articles are selected from the 148 articles that are retrieved. A brief analysis of the abstracts is conducted and 22 articles are selected. In total, 22 articles are identified using Google Scholar and used in writing this review.

FINDINGS

Gender Representation in Media: Analyzing the Evolution from Traditional to Emerging Platforms

It's critical to understand the differences between new and old media before getting started. When I say "old media," I mean traditional broadcast media like the Internet, radio, television, movies, magazines, ads, and news. Conversely, my goal in referring to new media is to discuss modern platforms like social media, digital imaging, 3D printers, augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), podcasts, and non-fungible tokens (NFT)(Bale et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2022; Qin et al., 2019).

When did it start?

When gender studies first came into existence in the 1970s, women's experiences were the main focus. Following the second feminist wave, post-feminism evolved as a way of thinking about and comparing women's experiences to those of males, to universalize and compare them. But "a world dominated by the media" posed a threat to this movement (Gill, 2007, p. 9). Women's awareness of gender discrimination and the media's desire to normalize masculinity and men became stronger as an outcome of their university education (Gill, 2007, p. 9). To find out why women have a lower profile in the media than males, research on gender and feminist studies in communication has been conducted. Feminism and gender studies are closely related fields; in fact, one may classify feminism as a subfield of gender studies (Benwell, 2003; Beynon, 2002).

What factors played a role in gender inequality in the old media?

Gender and communication studies examine the impact of social beliefs on people's personal lives and how these values influence the way society thinks (Byerly & Ross 2006).
The main players in the media tried to portray women as mentally and physically weaker than men. Based on the 10-year global media monitoring project (1995-2005), it can be concluded that female reporters are generally weaker and less credible than their male counterparts (Gallagher, 2005). As a result of male leadership with this mindset, a glass ceiling has always prevented women from reaching a higher position in all types of media (Joseph, 2004). For example, in advertising, women with a homely image and submissive personalities were chosen to present domestic and local products, However, men with a powerful and attractive appearance were chosen to present cars, drinks, and business products (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Gill, 2007; Meyers, 1999).
Moreover, the broadcasts' content was predominantly male-oriented (Croteau & Hoynes, 1992). Men in films and television tended to be key issues with patriarchy and capitalism themes, while women

tended to play secondary and less important parts, and also black, Latina, and Asian women played lesser valued roles (Joseph, 2004). Another factor was the age and appearance of women were very important, so that with increasing age, the job opportunities for women decreased, while they did not change for men (Gallagher, 2005).

Presence of Women in Emerging Media

Computer Gaming

Research shows that males spend more time playing than females, with 42% and 15.6%, respectively, (more than 20 hours each month). Nonetheless, there is little difference between men and women in terms of game success, which is a remarkable factor (Consalvo & Treat, 2002). Although men spend more time playing computer games, these games are equally popular among women. One of the most rewarding aspects of the game for female players is overcoming gender norms and stereotypes. In fact, these games allow them to engage in virtual conflicts alongside female charms, and challenge their fighting talents.

According to a survey by Yates and Littleton (2001) among adult computer gamers (aged 20-35), women have a wide range of interests in computer games that are not always tied to sexual expectations, and several women were outraged by sexist and rude behavior in games and the environment surrounding most of them. They describe it as male-centered, while gender-neutral games base competition on talent alone (Taylor, 2003).

Podcasts

Julia Hoydis in 2020, provided research about podcasts; she claimed that the fourth wave of feminism began in 2008, coinciding with the rise of podcasting. Podcasts are oral media that allow audiences to listen to a range of topics, such as deviant opinions and marginalized voices, without editorial limits, as opposed to radio, which has random themes. Indeed, the fourth wave of feminism is identical to the third wave, with the exception that podcasts and Twitter were introduced. Fourth-wave feminists have increased control over internet cultural and political material. She also claims that the fifth wave of feminism used free spaces to implement ideas and take action via hashtags (Frances-White, 2018). Podcasts have created convergence and dynamism between old and new media by overcoming the boundaries of identity and genre, and this is one of the contrasts between radio and

podcasts (Llinares, 2018). International listeners want more intimate interactions, especially around issues of gender and sexuality. Another difference between podcasts and radio is the way they are used. The isolation of the podcast listener and the use of headphones create more empathy, which leads to a deeper understanding of the content (Llinares 2018; Spinelli & Dann, 2019).

Metaverse

Based on the statistics conducted by Mina Alaghband and Lareina Yee in 2021, women spend more time each week in the Metaverse than men, and they employ technology in both the real and digital worlds for activities such as gaming, exercise, education, shopping, and live events, while men only use it for digital experiences, including games, NFT, and participation in social events. According to female administration statistics, women are more likely than men to take on several initiatives, particularly in marketing, training and advancement of employees, and designing products. Moreover, research shows that male-led metaverse companies receive higher funding than female-led ones, despite female consumers and executives being more proactive about metaverse usage and initiatives. In addition, standards bodies such as the Metaverse Standards Forum and OMA3 (Open Metaverse Alliance for Web3) establish metaverse interoperability standards, yet only 8-10% of member organizations are run by female CEOs, compared to 9 percent of Fortune 500 businesses.

To sum up, addressing the existing gender imbalance in leadership roles is therefore critical, especially because the metaverse is still in its early stages. To do so, industry stakeholders will need to engage a variety of viewpoints and create diverse leadership in the firms and alliances that now shape the metaverse (Alaghband & Yee, 2022).

The Role of Emerging Media in Recent Feminist Movements

As previously stated, post-feminism aimed to share and universalize women's experiences instead of drawing comparisons between them and those of men. Post-feminism also looks at intersectionalities, particularly in terms of race and class, in an attempt to critique the second wave of feminism. Within the post-feminist movement, communication was considerably supported by emerging media. The impact of new media on the development of feminism and post-feminism will be addressed in this section.

One example of recognizing this intersectionality is thinking about digital spaces such as social media. Research shows that digital spaces provide a suitable platform for feminist activities, especially through blogging and social media (Portwood-Stacer & Berridge, 2014). Using the hashtag #feminism on social media allows users to share their experiences with other victims/survivors of gender inequality and reactions to tragic news events, such as rape and sexual violence, in a searchable space, including images, sounds, and conversations for easier access In addition, provide attention for feminist triggers and real-time reaction to incidents (Altinay, 2014; Latina & Docherty, 2014). For example, there were 51,577 #WhyIStayed/#WhyILeft tweets and qualitative interviews with hashtag participants. Drawing from the concept of postfeminist perception (Gill, 2016).

Feminist Movements in Iran and Emerging Media

As Bayat points out, not all female activists may utilize this approach, especially Muslim and non-Muslim women in authoritarian nations, even though Western women should be commended for participating in public protests (Bayat 2013, p. 97). In countries like Iran, where feminist movements are met with strong opposition, protest movements must exhibit more resilience and resistance. Any kind of resistance, including online political activism and physical protests, has serious financial and personal dangers, and the media is strictly controlled by the government. It is impossible to participate in free activities that go against Islamic beliefs (Bayat 2013). This section will cover the role of traditional and emerging media in Iran, as well as the efforts put forth by Iranian women for basic rights.

After the 1979 Post-Revolution of Iran

Despite advances in women's rights during the Pahlavi era of 1925-1979, such as raising the minimum marriage age for girls from 13 to 18 and granting women the right to vote during the White Revolution of 1962, many of women's rights were revoked and anti-women laws were enacted following Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 (Kar, 2001).

These Islamic rules included stoning and flogging as vengeance, which were adopted by parliament in 1981. In addition, regardless of religion, women and girls must now wear hijab at gatherings in public. Despite these severe and harsh prohibitions, women continued to struggle.

Women's magazine began publication in 1992, concentrating on women's issues and difficulties as the first medium for women, and it demonstrated Islamic feminism following the 1979 revolution. (Esfandiari, 2005; Sherkat, 2009) This magazine closed in 2008 (Ansari, 2014).

Given the repressive context in Iran, online feminist activism became vital, paving the way for several important campaigns, which will be highlighted.

Campaign Against Stoning

In 1981, execution by stoning was implemented as one of the Islamic laws in Iran. According to the country's Zina laws, women were more likely to be sentenced to stoning than men, as they were often found guilty of adultery (Terman & Fijabi, 2010). In 2006, feminist activists started the "Stop Stoning Forever Campaign" to show the world that stoning was still occurring in Iran, despite the government's denial (Kar, 2007; Terman, 2007). In May 2009, a revised proposal presented to Iran's parliament abolished stoning as a punishment. In 2012, Iran's Islamic Punishment Law outlawed stoning as a punishment for adultery, replacing it with an undetermined death penalty (Basmechi, 2019).

One Million Signature Campaign

Initiated by Iranian women through peaceful protests in 2006, this campaign aimed to change discriminatory laws against women, such as unequal inheritance and marriage rights, lack of stronger penalties for domestic abuse, and honor killings (Keddie, 2007; Khorasani, 2009; Sameh, 2010). It started without any foreign assistance. Activists in this movement faced harassment, incarceration, and persecution from the government. Many were imprisoned, beaten, or given prison sentences. The authorities even threatened to execute them for atheism (Gilda, 2009).

My Stealthy Freedom (MSF)

Founded by Iranian journalist Masih Alinejad in 2014, this online movement protests the mandatory hijab law and mobilizes women to act against this compulsory rule. The main platforms are Facebook and Instagram, providing a space for women to share unveiled images and videos. #whitewednesdays #Wednesdays-without-force (Instagram, Masihalinejad page) After welcoming women, Alinejad launched other campaigns such as White Wednesdays (WW), My Camera is My Weapon, Marching Without Hijab, Our Pen is Our Weapon, White Everyday, and Invite to Protest

Mandatory Hijab. This culminated in the Girl of Revolution Street, referring to an instance where a girl without a hijab hung a white scarf on a piece of wood to protest the mandatory hijab law. She was arrested, and numerous individuals subsequently performed the same act on the streets, also facing detention (Basmechi, 2019).

#MahsaAmini

After the murder of 22-year-old Mehsa Amini on September 16, 2022, by moral security police due to her hijab, anti-government street protests erupted, leading to the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement. This political movement was unprecedented in terms of its global scale, visibility, lack of a clear leader, and the high social and political awareness of Iran's young generation. Although Iranian women have historically been at the forefront of political movements, these protests explicitly revolved around women's rights (H. Molana et al., 2023).

One of the most important factors contributing to this movement's progress, compared to previous ones, was the presence of new media such as Twitter and Instagram. These platforms played a crucial role in disseminating real-time news about clashes between protesters and security forces, as well as information about casualties during the "Mahsa uprising." Although the government attempted to prevent news from spreading by filtering and blocking the internet, communication was maintained with support from Iranians abroad and the use of filter breakers (Cai, 2023).

#MahsaAmini has also set a new record for the number of times it has been used since its launch on social networks. The hashtag has been used over 275 million times on Twitter. In addition to Twitter, Mehsa Amini's hashtag has been used millions of times on Instagram, and videos with this hashtag have had nearly 940 million views on TikTok. Wikipedia contributors. (2022, October 16)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women's activity and representation have changed dramatically as a result of the shift from traditional to new media. Current feminist movements, like Iran's "Woman, Life, Freedom", show how effective digital activism can be in breaking through censorship and mobilizing support for women's rights around the world.

Feminist studies and emergent media interact here, signaling a dynamic shift in the ways that women participate in and influence modern discourse. We must keep investigating how digital platforms may lead to significant social change and promote gender equality on a global scale in the future (Cai, 2023).

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