

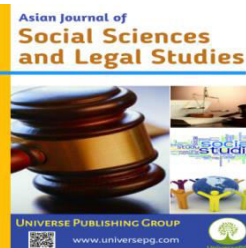


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## Analyzing the Gender Stereotypes in Media: Perception & Impact on Bangladeshi Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

There exists broad recognition of the pivotal role of media in bringing about social change through transformation, as media clearly reflects the values of any given civilization. But the misrepresentation of women in media is on the whole a national problem because the majority of Bangladeshi teenagers look up to and emulate the personalities shown in the media, leading to gender stereotypes and even violence at times. This study seeks to discover how Bangladeshi teenagers feel about women being portrayed in media, and how relevant those portrayals are to their everyday lives. A purposive sampling strategy was used to pick a random sample of 100 14- to 20-year-old pupils. Of the 100 pupils who participated in the survey, half were boys and half were girls. The research data was collected with the aid of a self-constructed questionnaire, including 30 questions. The study shows how the media in Bangladesh, including movies, dramas, and commercials, etc perpetuate sexist stereotypes on multiple levels. In addition, this depiction reinforces old patriarchal gender notions, which adolescents tend to accept. One of the findings showed, female students were more likely to support traditional stereotypes about women and were more in favor of government regulation of media content compared to male students.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh media, Adolescent, Portrayal, Women, Perception, Gender stereotype, and Patriarchy.

### INTRODUCTION:

Fifty percent of the overall population in Bangladesh are women, and they are regarded a country's key asset for development. Although modern women are succeeding in multiple worldwide spheres, systematic discrimination and the disregard of women's concerns remain commonplace, notably in Bangladesh. Media has always been a pillar of social change and reform. It has the ability to reach far and wide audiences and the potential to mobilize and influence public opinion in a big way. This allowed the media to have great influence in a democracy. As Aalberg and Jenssen, (2007) suggest, media plays a key role in defining and fra-

ming gender, and often takes the blame for the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. As a result, consumers of the media digest the information therein and develop views toward what is considered proper and inappropriate for men and women. Despite living in a modern world where people have the freedom to think, gender disparity is all the more obvious in various areas of society and the media profession is no exception (IWMF, 2011).

Due to advances in technology, we have various types of communication that we may now employ in our daily lives, including the internet, blogs, social media, text

messaging, wikis, and virtual worlds. New media, which are more effective methods of rallying popular support, also have the ability to influence the minds of the masses. Women play a significant part in every aspect of life, whether it's in the household, in the national economy, in individual careers, in child rising, or in making life better (Hossain, 2020).

To take on these positions, women need to be aware of their potential, and this is only achievable when they are not forced to be secondary to men. As a result, the media is responsible for aiding women in their efforts to attain their societal influence as positive change agents.

### **Background Study**

It is evident in our society that men, who have difficulty understanding that they are participating in a culture that dehumanizes and objectifies women, have a serious deficiency. So, women are objectified in everyday ways through the media's depiction of them as something to be desired. It's also thought that women are like empty pitchers, ready to receive the wants of males. Bangladeshi media is encouraging the propagation of such clips that objectify women in every aspect, including in films, social media, cosmetics, liquor, and even in domestic violence. It's common in most movies to show female victims of Stockholm syndrome suffering due to inflated male egos. The purpose of a woman is to either serve as a sexy marketing tool or an object of mass attraction. Unfortunately in Bangladesh, the media's depiction of women is such that they appear to be commodities to be purchased or sold, rather than people to be respected. They are sexualized. It is especially evident in advertisements for fairness creams and weight-loss pills, which exist solely to indicate that racism in this context is directed toward women. All of the male protagonist characters have crazy behaviors in order to torture women or force their decisions, so that they may demonstrate that women are inferior and have no respect. For instance, in the movie *Koshto*, the main character manipulated his wife like a puppet. His previous intimate problems included attacking his wife to alleviate his insecurities, and he began having sex with her again to save his desires. As a result, the media is making women more vulnerable to objectification, and there are many such examples to be seen.

### **Problem Statement**

Bangladesh's various forms of media have all portrayed a number of gender stereotypes and patriarchy, as well as women being objectified, in a variety of ways. The moral problem facing the media in this century is the fight for gender equality around the world, according to Kristof and Wudunn, (2010). Gender imbalance and continuation of gender stereotypes are all too apparent in the media industry when it comes to Bangladesh. Hence women are, in general, underrepresented in the media, and they hold less central roles in it. Furthermore, they are routinely objectified in a patriarchal culture. Finally, there is the misrepresentation of the relative importance of marriage and motherhood in the media. Furthermore, the depiction of women in conventional jobs shows them as having low status and authority. The Bangladeshi media demonstrates that women are more passive than men in their roles. Sultana, (2011) contends that the media in Bangladesh is connected to and mirrors the patriarchal culture in which it exists and shows women mainly in a bad light while portraying men as superior. When it comes to politics and society, a patriarchal society refers to the dominance of men in both public and private domains. Bangladeshi women are often portrayed in advertising in a clichéd way - for example, one billboard features three women who represent different concepts of success. The child's achievement is learning how to tie shoelaces, the man's is taking his first step on the moon, and the woman's is being crowned a beauty pageant winner (Ahmed, 2011). In Bangladesh, this situation demonstrates how the media sector reduces women to subservient roles. Yet again, Ahmed, (2013) has claimed that the image of women as "things" in TV advertising and movies from Bangladesh leads to youth seeing women as such in real life, which in turn makes for more violence against women in Bangladesh. As Kilbourne, (1999) argues, women are objectified in advertisements by being made into a spectacle of beauty and sex. In doing so, they are encouraged to buy particular beauty goods by creating a false image of what a woman should be. Women's bodies, minds, and souls have been proven to be limited by media images to serve the purposes of men. A significant amount of the negative media stereotypes of women in society may be traced back to the commercialization of women in media. The old idea is that

women who age are only interested in trivialities like housework and personal drama. The new image of women is as an attractive item. As a result, we see more advertising that objectify women, and utilize their bodies to promote things unrelated to their physique or needs. The goal of this study is to gain an understanding of how young people in Bangladesh see this issue.

### **Objectives**

The following concerns are addressed in this paper:

To look at how women are depicted in print and online media –

- To discover the influence of the depiction of women in Bangladesh's media on today's teenagers
- To determine whether the fictional image is anything like the reality
- How the image of women in media affects adolescents' views on gender
- How much consumers are encouraged to purchase products after seeing ads objectifying women
- Do ads' depictions of women mirror society's view of women?
- Does a female presence in advertising affect in selling products?

### **Literature Review**

The ways in which we live are impacted by the role of media in our life. This paper examines whether women are subject to stereotypes in all media genres, including television, web content, news media, and radio. A wide range of men and women, each with unique features, is portrayed in different media. This piece's subject matter is gender, and it especially focuses on the discussion over gender. Many images have been spotted in movies, on TV, and in advertising, and these depictions can influence people in a number of ways, whether or not they intended to do so. It is intriguing to examine how movies' portrayals of gender influence people's views of themselves and the world. The media have the ability to affect the public and their opinions on everything, Gauntlett, (2008) contends.

### **Difference between Sex and Gender**

Sex and gender are closely related and, in fact, share a fuzzy border between them. Biological sex is based on differences in male and female genitalia. Gender relates to a person's sociological and cultural sexual iden-

tity, as well as how they are viewed by society. On the other hand, a person's genetic sex may not correspond with their gender identity at times. People who identify as transgender, nonbinary, or gender-nonconforming are often known as such. WHO's definition of gender includes the fact that it is socially constructed and defined as the roles, norms, and relationships between women and men. While women and men in different cultures are typically expected to shoulder different levels of financial and decision-making responsibility, the time each spends in child rearing and supporting the family differs. The concept of gender roles is applied to this list of phenomena.

### **Under representation of Women**

Research has revealed that, in the media, women are usually portrayed in a manner that is dissimilar to men. For men, long-term and high-level career status is associated with their success, while women's career status is determined by their looks and beauty (Carter & Steiner, 2004). Gender studies, in general, suggest that both masculinity and femininity are important, but such ideas are rarely considered at the same time. Studies in media tend to focus on women's points of view and how they are depicted. It mostly highlights the negative parts of women's representation, with little discussion of the positive aspects. It generally doesn't care about how guys are represented. In any case, if it is discussed at all, it will be discussed to a similar degree. Additionally, media and gender is a massive field that generates ongoing data that may be collected and examined in a multitude of ways. An astonishing amount of movies and TV shows are created every year. The content of Bangladeshi films across time has demonstrated that ideological and political statements are present, showing what the people opposed during the era of the country's social order (Haque and Fatima, 2017). These movies either ignore feminist movements or advocate anti-feminist ideologies (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004). Additionally, Bangladeshi cinemas still appear to be upholding a “patriarchal privilege” with their gender representations.

### **Stereotypical Portrayals of Women and Men**

The media presents stereotypical images of women and men that restrict our view of human capability. Doyle's (1989) inquiry of masculinity, which features

males portrayed as aggressive, dominant, and engaged in stimulating activities with the potential to be rewarded for masculine successes, as outlined in. There have also been studies that demonstrate that prime-time television's main characters are generally autonomous, aggressive, and in charge (Cauley *et al.*, 1988). Women are most often shown as sexual objects, and they are usually assumed to be young, slim, beautiful, passive, dependent, and weak, along with being dumb and inept. Female characters mainly focus on self-improvement and maintaining homes and people in general. However, another option for the portrayal of female characters is to make them “evil” and “in human,” and they are thus depicted as being hard, cold, and aggressive - all things that a good woman should not be. Some examples of the characters of mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws who tend to play a villain in the movies made by Bangla Cinema can be gathered from the portrayal of those characters. It's always good to hear this kind of narrative from Bangladesh's audiences. To explore the role of men and women in the media (including cinema, television, and advertising), a table has been made based on the traits depicted in the media in general:

**Table 1:** Analytical framework of feminine and masculine features (Ottosen, 2012).

Feminine Traits	Masculine Traits
Physically weak	Physically Strong
Submissive	Assertive
Emotional	Unemotional
Dependant	Independent
Nurturing, Helpful	Selfish/Self-serving
Afraid, Fearful	Hero, Brave, Inspires fear
Troublesome	Problem solver
Follower	Leader
Victim	Perpetrator
Described as physically attractive	Described as having higher economic/career status and being intellectual
Asks for or accepts advice	Gives advice
Ashamed	Proud

This has been a long-standing practice in Bangladeshi media since the 1900s. Additionally, both the male and female characters tend to have some of the more typical character traits, which are universal to the cinema industry as a whole. Ottosen, (2012) found a number of universal traits in media, which he defined as "male" and "female" traits. The following is a summary of their discussion:

**(A) “Feminine” traits**

Physically inept - When someone is unable to carry out basic physical tasks, such as unclogging a drain or lugging a large box. subordinate (or submissive) -> obeying someone else without doubt Emotional-displaying both positive and negative feelings. Someone who depends on someone or something else, for example food, a place to live, or money. Caring, nurturing - Someone who helps another physically or mentally. Apprehensive - If someone is worried of getting hurt or something awful happening. Problematic - someone who gives others problems or misery. A believer – Someone who adores and supports someone or something else. Someone who devotes much of their time to a particular hobby and pays attention to all the relevant information about it. Victim: Someone who is being injured or tortured and who needs to be rescued. Stated to be physically lovely -> Stated to be physically attractive. Requests or accepts guidance - The character either seeks for help or somehow accepts assistance, showing a need for it. Embarrassed - One is embarrassed owing to his/her own actions.

**(b) “Masculine” traits**

A sign of the character's strength is their ability to lift large objects or hit anything. A person who firmly makes their views known so that other people take notice by announcing or expressing something. Not emotive - Characters without emotion someone who is self-sufficient, not depending on others for need. Selfish - Only thinking about themselves, with little regard for others. Those that are solely out for themselves. They are the hero, who bravely evokes terror - one who is esteemed for their valor, like bravery, or even just for their goodness. Someone who instills dread by frightening others.

Troubleshooter - A person who finds solutions to difficulties. Someone who directs others in some way. Criminal - Someone who does a criminal act or malicious act. said to be more career- and money-minded - A person considered as intellectually elevated. Additionally, this person is engaging in other intellectual activities such as reading. Advises on social graces - a person who gives counsel on matters such as etiquette, social conduct, and so on. Proud - Having pride in something that is new.



### **Women in Different Media**

In the media, women have been depicted and treated differently for years. For example, in ads, women are portrayed as low-value sexual objects. It communicates negative messages about how women should be treated and the standing of women in society steadily degrades. Likewise, gender stereotypes can be noticed, because women are given responsibilities that are not sufficiently essential at home and outside, that depend on males and continuously need protection (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). In fact, advertising for men's products usually include women as sex objects, such as deodorant advertising, rushing cream, look, etc. Dominick and Rauch, (1974) studied 1000 TV ads and discovered that the role played by women is limited to housewives and moms, with rarely any kind of occupational positions. This type of clichéd image of women in the media certainly has a negative impact on teenage girls who recognize their role model in these commercials. In the same way, it gives adolescent guys a bad message about their style of treating women. The prevalence of sex stereotypes in ads, however, is not just contained in Bangladesh or the Asian subcontinent; they can also be seen worldwide (Siu & Au, 1997; Japan, Ford *et al.*, 1998; Cutler *et al.*, 1995; Sen-gupta, 1992). In TV industry, Bangle drama and everyday soap, according to Kabir (2019), women were represented as beautiful animals, subservient children's mothers, efficient housekeepers, but nothing else. The impact of television is demonstrated in comparison with adults in young children and teenagers. This could have a negative effect on the conduct and attitude of adolescents. The print media also represent not only the values of society, but also give a platform for communication and debates on problems that contribute to social change (Kumar, 1995). It is commonly shown that women's problems do not generally have an opportunity to be on the front-page unless they are rape, crime, sexual harassment, female abuse or such tragedies. Even in women's news, they are shown as passive victims or passive reactors in news media for public events. However, women's visibility of news is heavily covered in certain days, such as Mother's Day, Women's Day etc. In most cases, women's news is generally concerned with sensational glamor, sex, domestic violence, etc. stories. Films, on the other hand, are the most sophisticated way to communicate

and Bangladesh films are made in numerous areas, including family social drama. It is the most influential and popular medium in particular, where the audience is often taken and any immoral interpretation can influence society unethically. Unfortunately, women are demonstrated to be scarcely a worker unless they are forced to do so. She usually sits at home or shops even if she is highly educated. Even if the areas of work are shown, however, teachers, attorneys and receptionists are specified. In this context, Gallagher (1992) quite accurately says that professional women commonly experience sexual harassment by strengthening the media's masculinity.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The current research is a comparative study, which describes the actual status, attitude and impression of the provided circumstance. For the conduct of research, both primary and secondary data were utilized. The primary data are based on the quantitative method utilized to collect the required information by the research method. A total of 100 students aged 14 to 20 years were chosen using a targeted sample method. This means that in particular the teens have been picked as regular visitors or users of both internet and print media. The sample included 50 girls and 50 guys out of the 100 pupils. A number of Bangladeshi films, advertisements, theatre, and printed media were evaluated to investigate existing gender stereotypes for secondary data collecting.

### **Data Collection**

The method utilized for the study was a self-constructed questionnaire consisting of 30 questions to be answered on the basis of their assessment of women's images in the media. The data was acquired from 100 students, who completed questionnaires between the respondent and the researcher one by one.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The results acquired by administration of the questionnaire have been analyzed statistically, such as mean and standard deviation, and the detailed scenario has been shown. It also evaluated the view of boys and girls about women in the media and how far they connect to actual conditions of life and hypotheses that predominate in society. Microsoft Excel Application Version 2018 and Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) Version 23 have been utilized for data analysis.

**Table 1:** Percentile distribution of perception of adolescents regarding portrayal of women in media.

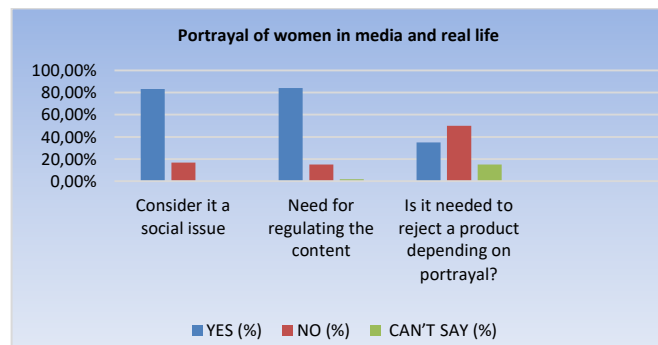
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Can't Say (%)
Depiction of unnecessary vulgarity	72%	26%	2%
Overemphasizing beauty and sexuality	82.4 %	6.6%	11%
Used as commodity	69%	17%	17%
Use of women to increase sale of product	87.8%	11%	1.2%
Stereotypical role of women	85.7%	2%	7.2%
Play submissive role	60.7%	20%	19%

**Table 2:** Percentile distribution of adolescents considering it a matter of concern for the society.

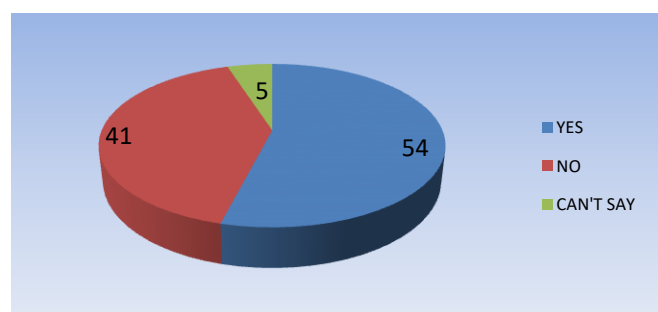
	YES (%)	NO (%)	CAN'T SAY (%)
Consider it a social issue	83.3%	16.7%	--
Need for regulating the content	84%	15%	1.7%
Is it needed to reject a product depending on portrayal?	35%	50%	15%

**Table 1** shows clearly that some 72 percent of adolescents find an unneeded portrayal of women's vulgarity in media, 82 percent consider that media stresses beauty and sexuality, while 69 percent believe that women are used in different locations as commodities. Country adolescents again believe that women are represented in commercials to sell more products (87.8 percent), and 60.7 percent believe that women play a sub missionary role in the media, which strongly impacts the mentality of young girls. More than anything, 85.7 percent of young people believe that the stereotypical images of women are obvious in various Bangladeshi media.

The result of **Table 2** reveals that the present generation is not particularly uninformed of what is going on in their environment and is concerned with the problems and challenges facing society. 83.3% of adolescents view these existing preconceptions as a social problem. 84% of young people say that the content of media must be regulated, but just 35% contemplate rejecting a product on a portrait basis.

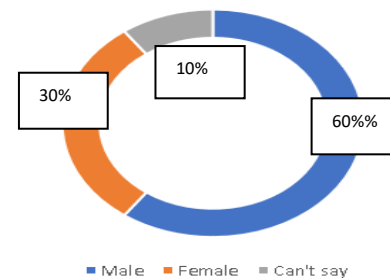


**Fig 1** provides a representation showing how Bangladeshi teenagers relate women in actual life with women. It says that 54% of teenagers agree that women are discriminated against and objectified in real life, exactly as they are portrayed in media. This phenomenon is extremely serious and must surely be tackled immediately.



**Fig 1:** Perception of adolescents regarding the portrayal of women in media and its relationship to the real life.

Interest in Seeing Women Stereotyped



**Fig 2:** Adolescents Interest towards Watching Women in Stereotyped Roles.

The above mentioned **Fig 2** represents a schematic illustrating the interest of adolescents in the stereotyping of women. It has also been revealed that almost 60% of men prefer to see these gender stereotypes, whereas just 30% of women want to continue this stereotyped portrait. Men are especially interested in perceiving women as sensuous objects that urge the media

industry to continue with the stereotype. However, 10 percent of young people are still uncertain about their perception. This is little contrary to another conclusion from the same study that 79 per cent of students think that women's illusions should be rejected, while simultaneously enjoying attractive models in sensuous cos-

tumes. It can be claimed that today's teenagers know it's unethical and should be stopped. You are also aware that rejecting these things may diminish the immoral representation of women, but they are very self-centered and give priority to their own enjoyment and worry about the problem.

**Table 3:** Mean and standard deviation of the perception of adolescents regarding portrayal of women in media.

Items	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Depiction of unnecessary vulgarity	Male	0.29166667	0.45934
	Female	0.2	0.405096
Overemphasizing beauty and sexuality	Male	0.85416667	0.356674
	Female	0.95	0.220721
Used as commodity	Male	0.85416667	0.356674
	Female	0.85	0.36162
Use of women to increase sale of product	Male	0.89583333	0.308709
	Female	0.975	0.158114
Stereotypical role of women	Male	0.875	0.334219
	Female	0.85	0.36162
Play submissive role	Male	0.875	0.334219
	Female	0.575	0.500641

**Table 4:** Mean and standard deviation of adolescents considering it a matter of concern for the society.

Items	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Consider it social issue	Male	0.85416667	0.35667396
	Female	0.8	0.40509575
Need for regulating content	Male	0.77083333	0.4247444
	Female	0.875	0.33493206
Is it needed to reject a product depending on portrayal?	Male	0.45766898	0.32697748
	Female	0.55364469	0.38162029

It is obvious in **Table 3** that adolescents' impression of the usage of women in the media as commodities and ornamental item is significantly similar, where they have a sex-stereotyped function to play and their physical beauty is overemphasized rather than their success. As the mean values indicate, it may also be deduced from the table that men and women agree. Similarly, no substantial difference in unethical and needless profanity was identified between children and females (mean-0.2). Most boys consider that women play subservient roles in comparison with women. In addition, women believe that women are used in the media to enhance product sales (mean 0.97), however not everyone thinks like this. In **Table 4** it is evident that the present young generation is already quite conscious of the current situation and has moral standards, and therefore it is a social issue, both for men and women (mean- 0.8). However, it is shown that women are more concerned with contents regulation

(mean- 0.87) than men (mean- 0.77). Women want to be portrayed rather than portrayed as sex objects, as inspiring and empowered beings. Similarly, women feel the need to reject a product according to the picture (mean 0.55), but males disagree a little about it (mean- 0.45).

#### CONCLUSION:

Gender equality, a sustainable development goal of the United Nations is needed to be achieved in each aspect of society, including the media, as. Media proves to be a prominent mean for advocating gender equality and increasing the present standing of women in society. It is an enormous influence on individuals. It is regrettable, however, that the media still strengthens stereotypical images of women and their social positions. The news concerning women concerns mostly their difficulties and atrocities that mostly reveal the insensitivity of the media towards women in terms of gender. This is why the transforming image of women

from a passive viewer and recipient to a positive doer and achiever should be given the utmost attention. However, certain modifications have recently been made to women's role in the media. In many advertising and advertising sites such as Teletalk, Robi, Senora, Freedom, etc., women are portrayed as empowered and independent personalities that largely inspire adolescent girls. In addition, various emotive and striking short films are distributed via Youtube and Facebook that have no stereotypical signal. This kind of representation can bring about a constructive and encouraging attitude to women in society, which is also enormously accountable for bringing about a change in the perspective of masses in society.

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#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest involved.

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