FEMINISM AND PERSONALITY OF WOMEN IN JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to demonstrate few common hypothetical and methodological perspectives related media and journalism which is again viewed from feminist’s standpoint. The feminist researchers and scholars related to media and journalism have opened up some important perspectives that are not just restricted to the position and responsibility given or born by the women journalists and media persons but extended too many other aspects like women as audiences, their own experience in this industry, and many other important aspects. The article is based on a case-study. It tries to answer the question: whether there exists any gender discrimination in the newsroom of the mentioned Australia newspaper and whether there are different working conditions existing between the female and male journalists in the newsroom? The case-study takes into account qualitative methodologies that include the observations of the participants and in-depth interviews with the participants. The study tries to explore the question whether there is any visible difference existing as mentioned above. As a whole, the central investigation is to examine whether Australian female journalists in the concerned newsroom follow the same male-centric journalism or they have their own ways of working?.

Keywords: Personality, media, gender, journalism, interviews, femininity

INTRODUCTION

The assumption in this article is that historical and present social structure is mostly influenced by power relation which differentiates individuals from one another. Such power relations in most of the occasions nullify the other common categories of social differentiation like race, class, religion, or gender differences. It makes our view narrow as it leads to domination and marginalization of a certain group of people, more precisely weaker section of the society.

The aim of the article is to plot diverse approaches in getting a clear idea on gender differentiation taking media feminism as the basic structure. With that, the research has bought some hypothetical and methodological propositions that can make some fruitful research works in future. The purpose of the article to give a clear idea of journalism, gender, personality in the workplace, media, and research.
For introducing some research ideas, the article has introduced a specific case study that shows the position of female professionals in the newsroom or in journalism. A case study is an exploratory, comprehensive, all-including research procedure [1]. It can include both quantitative and qualitative evidence. First of all, the current article looks into the matter whether there is an existing perception about the female professionals in the newsroom which gives the notion that the female journalists work in a different way than their male counterparts. Here, we have tried to find whether there is any perceived difference in the journalistic belief between the work procedure of male and female journalists including the notion that the stories are assigned as per the gender. Our research has shown that female journalists work somewhat differently and there is a perceived conception that the female journalists work differently. Thus, gender personality is there in the media workplace and such gender personality influences the characteristics of the contents in spite of various pressures from the management.

According to Butler (2002), from the very beginning of the profession, journalism is a gender-specific profession, the nature of the profession or workplace issues related to the professional journalists cannot be understood without understanding gender power theory [2]. We all are aware that categorization of work according to gender varies from one culture to another. So, we have adopted critical examination of different feminist theories taken from different cultural and historical background.

PERSONALITY AND ITS ROLE IN NEWS SECTOR

A story becomes news when it passes through some gates which are open and closed by the journalists. The “gates” are most often influenced by the own personalities of the journalists where gender is also a prime factor. As per Fiske (1987) culture places different expectations on men and women [3]. Again, Gill opines that women have different thinking pattern because they lead a different lifestyle.

As workplaces expand deep into the societies, some effects are realized in the newsroom too, in many instances. Consequently, a question arises: whether the gender of a reporter or journalist has any influence over the news selection and development of the news – is it possible that a female journalist prefers female issues or soft stories and deal with the stories in soft and emotional manners? In this regard, the study of Bleske is worth mentioning where the researcher narrates that only 8.5% of the stories selected by the women journalists belong to women’s issues or have women as the center of the story or the source of the story [4]. The researcher further opines that in this industry there is a deep-rooted prejudice exists women as journalists. According to the author, this prejudice can be broken with the introduction of more women decision-makers in the newsrooms [5].

The popular theory of Social Control in newsrooms by Breed can better explain the issues raised by Bleske. Breed indicated six prime functions in a newsroom that ensures that the staffs follow the policies of the workplace. According to the theorists, in many instances, the institutional policies can be in conflict with personal or professional norms of an individual [6]. So, the news selection and representation of both male and female journalists can be very much similar in spite of their different upbringing and different professional views just because of institutional policies.

For explaining the results of Van research, another prominent theory proposed by Gallego can be applied where the author opines that women journalists go through a gender socialization process, when they start working in media, they actually go through a secondary socialization process which can be termed as “male” socialization process [7].

In the early 1920s, Virginia Wolf claimed that journalism begun as an occupation of males. As Curran writes the opinion of Wolf that the world says to him that write if you choose but the same world says to her “what’s the good of you writing?” So, in order to invade the male-dominated area, women have to suppress many of their inherent values which are the first socialization of women in this profession [8]. Although we cannot distinguish between male and female aspects of journalism, Djerf-Pierre and
Lofgren-Nilsson have narrated few important aspects of male and female journalists based on their examinations and perceptions. For example, the modern-day approach, presentation of a soft news in an entertaining or emotional ways is believed to be a proportionate that is again considered the female way of journalism. It is not a male way of journalism. On the other hand, in a traditional style of presentation of a story public interest is focused not the human interest which is considered as the male style of journalism. Thus, it suggests that media has changed due to feminization not due to commercialization. In this respect, Gill’s characteristics contradict Bleske results and Gallego’s secondary socialization theory [10].

Butler (2002) opines that many changes have taken place in media [2]. With the increased introduction and involvement of female employees, the style of writing and the principal focus of reporting have changed in many ways. Subjects of focus that were considered female-centric and used to get minimum attention are now covered with great interest, even women journalists choose the events that were considered as male-centric even a few years ago, have been covering in their own ways.

Citing the opinion Christmas, Gill in his research paper narrates that news on health, family; personal achievement, education, etc. are covered with more interest which Christmas actually thinks a feminization of newsrooms [9]. Moore, a renowned former editor of the newspaper “The Daily Telegraph” expresses his opinion on the current shift of trend in the print media almost in the same way as Christmas. Moore opines the newspapers have realized that over 50% newsreader is females that requires some sorts of female-centric news coverage. According to him, it is not triviality or bringing down the market value of a newspaper, it is a more humanistic way of news presentation which was non-existing in older days. The opinions of Christmas and Moore oppose Blake’s opinion and the theory of Gallego. In this matter, Froehlich supports the views of Christmas and Moore that female journalists have their own ways of working and this is beneficial for the overall system as females according to Curran (1991) are better communicators and presenters [8]. He further narrates that some female aspects of human behavior like thoughtfulness, empathy, reaching to a consensus, dealing with people with mildness and patience, etc. are important in building a strong career in journalism which when contrasted with male aspects of human behavior like aggressiveness, individualism, rationality, etc. can make a huge difference in the ability of making and representing a story. However, it has also some sorts of “pigeon-holding” of women journalists in soft news. In this matter, different studies have different opinions – some supports that female journalists have their own working while some others opine that they have to learn and follow male ways of working.

Fiske (1987) compares the contents of thirty newspapers in the UK with the presence and influence of female managerial roles in those newspapers [3]. Their research work supports the views of Christmas and Moore saying that newspapers with female managerial role and influence publish more positive news. However, the researchers also support the views of Bleske with the saying that newspapers with more women in higher managerial positions publish to some extent less current human-centric stories than the newspapers with a low percentage of women in higher managerial positions [4]. This inconsistency can be explained from another aspect. According to Van, it is not all due to female presence in contemporary media services, there is a clear shift towards soft journalism with humanistic approach which can be attributed to commercial reasons than as a consequence of determined action on the part of the management to introduce feministic approach to journalism [7]. Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson also support this view. They further add that commercialization may instigate gender differences as behind the definition of commercialization in media there lays the symptoms of gender differences in both journalistic and human approaches. This means, “new journalism” is not a result of the differences exist in gender socialization rather due to the inclusion of commercialization [9]. Commercialization actually depicts the gender differences more vividly in the workplace and market. Thus, the changes in the contemporary style of news presentation are not the result of feminization rather commercialization.
DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES OF A JOURNALIST

Every journalist needs to negotiate among three personalities: The gender personality, the organizational personality, and the professional personality [7]. There are other personalities too like class, ethnicity, race, etc. that influence which de Bruin considers significant in different levels but he has not analyzed them. Organizational personality is the organizational environment where a journalist has been working, the elements described by Curran (1991) comes into discussion when a journalist takes into account his or her organizational personality. On the other hand, Professional personality comprises of values that are extended across organizations like the professional ethics of a journalist [8]. Now, there remain several points of clashing, like a journalist who does not want to write a commercial story may be forced to write by his or her organizational personality.

The case study depicted here primarily focuses on the newsroom related gender personality and how journalists see it from their own perception. It tries to compare the perception of gender personality of the journalists in the concerned newsroom and observation of gender personality within the same newsroom. It questions whether there are any visible perceived and observed gender personalities in the newsroom. The study further focuses on the organizational personality and how the journalists perceive it staying within the working environment and whether any correlation exists between the two genders in selecting the story types they normally want to represent for the organization's publications. In the presence of such a correlation alongside the visible difference in the gender personalities, it can be inferred that organizational personality is stronger than gender personality.

CONCLUSION

With the correct applications of these two perceptions, we can prepare a rational strategy which can help us to identify the inaccuracy in the feministic approach in analyzing the current difference or adjustment between two genders in media. From a typical feminist approach, the empowerment is important for capital accumulation. The notion of “empowerment” as depicted through advertising actually strengthens the already existing inequalities present in the capitalism. It does so by enhancing the process of exploitation, oppression, and control by seducing the people through the falsification of freedom and reality. The method of developing a wide array of categories for the readers like beauty, sex, men, women, fashion, and etc. media is actually inducing the readers to think that they are now more empowered. This somewhat makes the same environment as that of liberal democratic capitalism. The term “empowerment” actually means that all subjects in a concerned situation are equally “able”. There should not be any term like the elite in the realm of empowerment in capitalism.

But, the elites as we see in capitalism hide their power behind the professed concern for broader aspects of capitalism like “liberation” or “participation”. It is really hard to achieve gender equality or any other personality beyond ethnicity, unless and until the gender politics is minimized. There is an ardent requirement of countering feminism in the newsrooms.

REFERENCES

