

# Unlocking the Impact of Media on Young Women's Social Change

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the multifaceted impact of media on human development, individual behavior, women's empowerment, and the cognitive and social growth of children. It emphasizes the social empowerment, cultural, economic, and political factors through which the media shapes public awareness and promotes sustainable development. Drawing on theories from communication and sociology, this paper examines how both traditional and digital media influence human cognition, attitudes, and values, particularly among women and children. Social change involves the evolution of human interactions, cultural norms, and social institutions over time. It refers to significant shifts in a society's structure, behavior, or culture, often driven by new ideas, technological progress, or economic growth. The analysis shows that while media can promote societal knowledge, women's empowerment, and social unity, it also has the potential to reinforce stereotypes, cultural uniformity, and psychological dependence. The paper concludes that media institutions should implement balanced, ethical, and culturally sensitive content policies to enhance social resilience for gender equality.

**Keywords:** Media Influence, Women's Empowerment, Social Change

## Introduction

Media plays a pivotal role in social change by raising awareness and educating both governmental and civil society organizations about the importance of investing in people. It influences society's human capital through various dimensions: i) Social Dimension: covering social behavior, traditions, teamwork, and scientific thinking. ii) Cultural Dimension: emphasizing education, preservation of national heritage, and openness to global culture. iii) Administrative Dimension: focusing on governance, efficiency, and incentive systems for productivity. iv) Economic Dimension: addressing population growth, labor migration, and sectoral priorities. v) Political Dimension: highlighting trust between citizens and leadership as a foundation for development.

## Literature review

### The Influence of Media on Societies

Media, whether traditional or modern, profoundly affects individuals' cognitive and social structures. It can promote new cultural patterns or reinforce existing values depending on the

audience's selective exposure to media messages [1]. Its effects may be short-term or long-term, visible or latent, positive or negative [2].

### Major areas of influence include

- Attitude Change: shaping perceptions toward issues, people, and behaviors.
- Cognitive Change: restructuring knowledge systems through prolonged exposure.
- Value and Norm Transformation: through socialization processes.
- Behavioral Change: triggered by cumulative informational and emotional stimuli.

### Factors Influencing Media Effectiveness

The effectiveness of media depends on environmental, medium-specific, content-based, audience-related, and interactional variables [3]. Ecological factors include political and economic conditions; medium variables include credibility and diversity; content variables involve appeal, repetition, and relevance; and audience factors depend on education, selectivity, and psychological readiness. Media significantly shape cognitive frameworks by influencing how individuals interpret and judge

social reality. Repeated exposure to specific content gradually changes existing cognitive structures, replacing traditional beliefs with new perspectives. For example, portrayals of women's roles in modern media may challenge or distort traditional values, thereby reshaping collective understanding [4].

### The Impact of Media on Women

Women are key contributors to social development. However, media representations often oscillate between empowerment and objectification. While some outlets promote women's participation and rights, others reinforce modernized stereotypes detached from cultural contexts [5]. Studies found that female-focused programming in developing countries frequently prioritizes beauty and consumption over intellectual or social contributions.

Media can make a positive impact by promoting health education, awareness of gender-based violence, and social inclusion of young women. It should focus on themes like personal hygiene, reproductive health, maternal care, and family planning [6]. On the other hand, negative portrayals might weaken cultural identity and self-esteem among women.

Childhood is a critical developmental stage. Modern studies indicate that children spend more time engaging with screens than attending school activities. Repeated exposure to violent or immoral media content can distort moral reasoning and encourage antisocial behavior [7]. Parents' failure to monitor content exacerbates these risks.

To counter these effects, families and policymakers must guide media consumption, regulate inappropriate content, and promote educational programming that strengthens cultural values and creativity [8].

### Problem of the study

Overall, while the media contributes positively to gender discourse and empowerment, it simultaneously reproduces certain structural and cultural biases. This duality supports earlier theoretical perspectives such as Social Construction Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory, which emphasize that media not only reflect social reality but also actively construct and prioritize it [2]. The relatively high endorsement of women-led media further points to the transformative potential of inclusive communication frameworks that amplify women's voices and promote equitable participation in shaping societal narratives [3].

This paper explored the impact of media on young women's social change through articulating the following objectives:

### Objectives of the study

1. To explore the impact of media from the perspective of young women graduates.
2. To identify the impact of media on social change for young women graduates.

### Methodology

A sample size of 400 young women graduates was drawn from the academic year 2024-2025. The target group criteria are

illustrated as follows: fresh graduates who use media and have graduated from the University within the time frame of data collection. Women were questioned to determine the effect of media use on their perceptions. The data was collected in August 2025, using 20 focus group discussions; each group consisted of 20 participants.

### Conceptual definitions of the study

1. Media: The method of communication where individuals produce, share, and exchange knowledge and concepts. Media includes the use of both traditional and social media.
2. University graduates: fresh youth, females, who graduated from the university during the academic year 2024-2025 between the ages of 22 - 25 years old.

### Sampling and Data Analysis

An organized group discussion technique was conducted with the respondents of women graduates who use media. The data was collected through undertaking 20 focus group discussions.

### Ethical considerations

The confidentiality of the data was assured. Sufficient information was provided about the purpose of the study and the need to record discussions.

### Study sample limitation

The study sample was drawn from graduates (22-25 years old) to ensure they had been exposed to media channels. The sample consisted of young women who graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture at Ain Shams University.

### Findings and Discussions

#### The first result related to the first objective

The data presented in Table (1) reveal a generally positive perception of the media's role in facilitating social change among women. A significant majority of respondents, 78% agreed that the media acts as a catalyst for social transformation by shaping collective consciousness and redefining societal norms, indicating a strong recognition of the media's transformative influence on social attitudes. Similarly, 87% affirmed that media representation contributes to the construction or deconstruction of cultural identities and social hierarchies, highlighting the media's power to influence perceptions of gender and cultural identity.

Moreover, 74% of participants agreed that sustained media exposure can gradually restructure cognitive and attitudinal frameworks, reflecting the long-term educational and ideological impact of continuous media engagement. However, comparatively lower agreement levels 52% were observed regarding the diffusion of innovation through media networks, suggesting that while media is influential in shaping social values, its effectiveness in driving behavioral adaptation may depend on contextual and technological factors.

**Table: 1 Perception of Young Women Towards Media**

Total %	%	Disagree	%	Neutral	%	Agree	Perception towards Media
400	17.5%	70	4.5%	18	78%	312	The media acts as a catalyst for social transformation by shaping collective consciousness and redefining societal norms.
400	25%	100	9%	36	66%	264	Through agenda-setting and framing, mass media direct public attention toward key developmental and reform issues.
400	25.5%	102	22.5%	90	52%	208	The diffusion of innovation through media networks accelerates behavioral adaptation within changing societies.
400	12.5%	50	0.5%	2	87%	348	Media representation contributes to the construction or deconstruction of cultural identities and social hierarchies.
400	25%	100	4%	16	71%	284	Media platforms foster participatory communication that empowers marginalized voices in social movements.
400	18.5%	74	7.5%	30	74%	296	Sustained media exposure can gradually restructure cognitive and attitudinal frameworks, reinforcing social change.

**The result related to the second objective:**

#### **Objective 2:**

The results presented in Table (2) illustrate the complex and often ambivalent role of media in shaping women's social change. The data reveal that a considerable proportion of respondents 77% perceive media as an effective tool for promoting gender equality, emphasizing its contribution to public awareness, advocacy, and representation of women in various domains. Similarly, 74% agreed that media challenge traditional gender norms, indicating that mass and digital media platforms serve as spaces where patriarchal assumptions can be contested and redefined. Furthermore, 75% of participants supported the role of women-led media, underscoring the importance of female agency in creating authentic narratives and equitable representations.

Conversely, the findings also highlight persistent limitations and contradictions in media portrayals. Over half of the respondents 53% believed that the media reinforces existing power dynamics, while 41% agreed that it affirms family stereotypes, suggesting that, despite progress, many media outputs continue to perpetuate conventional gender hierarchies. Notably, only 37% acknowledged the media's success in raising awareness about gender-based violence, whereas 58% disagreed, indicating a significant communication gap in addressing one of the most critical aspects of gender inequality.

**Table: 2 Impact of Media on Young Women's Social Change**

Total	%	Disagree	%	Neutral	%	Agree	Social Change
400	44	176	3%	12	53%	53%	Reinforcing power dynamics in societies
400	46.5%	186	12.5%	50	41%	164	Affirming family stereotypes
400	20.75%	83	2.25%	9	77%	308	Promoting gender equality
400	58%	232	5%	20	37%	148	Raising awareness of gender-based violence
400	18.5%	74	7.5%	30	74%	296	Challenging gender norms
400	73%	292	8%	32	65%	260	Providing gender role images
400	22.5%	90	2.5%	10	75%	300	Women-led media

The data presented in Table (3) reveal a concerning pattern of social and psychological risks associated with young women's exposure to media platforms. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents experience negative outcomes linked to digital engagement, with 85% reporting unsafe workspaces, 82.5% encountering gender-based violence, and 80% identifying bullying as a prominent risk. These high percentages demonstrate how online environments often reproduce offline gender inequalities and expose women to new forms of digital vulnerability, including sexual harassment and emotional harm.

Additionally, 65% of participants reported increased anxiety, and 52.5% felt a sense of self-worthlessness, highlighting the significant psychological burden associated with continuous social media use. Such findings align with existing literature suggesting that idealized portrayals and online comparison culture exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and anxiety among young women [5]. The

57.5% reporting harassment further underscores the persistence of hostile online climates that restrict women's freedom of expression and participation in public discourse [7].

**Table: 3 Media Risks to Young Women**

Total	%	No	%	Yes	Media Risks
400	47.5%	190	52.5%	210	Self-worthless
400	35%	140	65%	260	Increased anxiety
400	42.5%	170	57.5%	230	Sexual Harassment
400	20%	80	80%	320	Bullying
400	17.5%	70	82.5%	330	Gender based violence
400	15%	60	85%	340	Unsafe workspace
400	27.5%	110	72.5%	290	Peer pressure

## Conclusion

Overall, the findings demonstrate the media's multifaceted role as both an information source that can promote empowerment, awareness, and reform. Accordingly, the responses across several statements imply that media influence is not always perceived as positive, warranting further qualitative exploration of factors such as media credibility, content diversity, and audience selectivity.

Overall, the data suggest that while social media can serve as a platform for empowerment and connectivity, it also intensifies socio-psychological vulnerabilities when left unregulated. These findings reinforce the urgent need for gender-sensitive digital literacy programs, stronger cyber-safety policies, and ethical content governance to mitigate risks and harness media's transformative potential for young women's social change.

## Recommendations

1. Promote Responsible Oriented Media Content: Media institutions should prioritize educational, cultural, and developmental programming that aligns with national values and social progress goals.
2. Strengthen Media Literacy and Audience Engagement: Establishing community-based and school-level media literacy initiatives is essential to help individuals, especially women and youth, critically interpret media messages.
3. Institutionalize Gender-Sensitive and Child-Protective Media Policies: Policymakers and media organizations should adopt clear regulatory frameworks to ensure fair gender representation, protect children from harmful exposure, and encourage women-led and child-centered content production.

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