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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SHAPING GENDER STEREOTYPES

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**Abstract**— One of the most pressing issues that concern members of society in the era of globalization is the gender problem. Gender roles begin to form from the day a person is born. In this regard, the media, which is called the "fourth branch of government", also has important responsibilities. Thus, based on the proverb "A word expresses one thought, a picture a thousand", we can note that the media affects people's daily lifestyles, brains, thoughts, moral values, worldview, and social relationships. In the modern world, there is no member of society who can escape the influence of the media. Along with its positive aspects such as its informative, educational, and entertaining function in society, the media also has negative aspects. In addition to delivering information, the media can analyze them and influence people's thoughts and ideas in different directions. According to the theory of behaviorism, human behavior is affected by positive and negative events occurring in the external environment.

**Keywords**— Mass media, gender stereotypes, formation of gender roles, gender asymmetry, psychological pressure

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## INTRODUCTION

In our modern era, transformations in sociocultural reality are intensifying and leading to the emergence of new models of gender behavior. Today, it can be said that conflict situations often arise in the sociocultural sphere, the basis of which is gender inequality, which is the result of clashes

between traditional and modern worldviews. Transformation and its two main elements - threats and risks - are closely related to each other, but fundamentally different. Thus, if transformation is a process that affects the entire spectrum of social, political, economic and moral factors, then threats and risks are social concepts related to the purposeful behavior of the subject, as well as the quantitative possibility or impossibility of

achieving the result, its uncertainty. Modern globalization processes, although generally spontaneous, erode traditional society from within. Therefore, in the context of information technology changes, innovative gender values appear, which, through socio-cultural interactions, strengthen their spontaneous influence on traditional culture. As a result, the closed nature of society is disrupted and an open structure is formed, which, accepting external influences, violates traditional socio-cultural integrity, creating real threats and risks to the cultural code. As a result, the interconnected transformation, threats, and risks create unique constructs that lead to social changes within the system and within the gender system in society as a whole, and become an object of research and social policy as a relevant topic.

Engaging the international community and many stakeholders, including higher education institutions, gender equality is vital for the development of social policies to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda envisions a world of “universal respect for human rights and human dignity” and “in which all women and girls enjoy full gender equality and are empowered by all means, and in which all legal, social and economic barriers are removed.” The Agenda affirms gender equality not only as a fundamental human right but also as a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world (UNDP 2016). Non-discrimination on the basis of sex has been a cornerstone in the development of international principles and norms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948, Article 2), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), the Fourth World Conference on the Rights of Women held in Beijing in 1995 (UN Beijing PfA 1995, Article 3), and other international conferences reflect the international, regional and national principles for achieving gender equality. Over the years, significant progress has been made in ensuring gender equality and transforming gender stereotypes (Gender, media & ICTs, 2019, p. 24).

The media not only disseminates gender stereotypes, but also plays an important role in their transformation and reshaping. Thus, a number of media organizations and publications

promote more active participation of women in society, contribute to the development of gender equality by expanding awareness of their rights and opportunities.

Television and advertising in particular are among the main tools that have a strong influence on the formation of gender stereotypes. In advertising content, women are often associated with household and family roles, while men are presented in the context of power, independence and professional activity, which leads to the formation of limited and stereotypical ideas about gender roles in society.

At the same time, in modern times, the media has a serious social responsibility in terms of promoting gender equality. Journalists and media representatives must adhere to the principle of objectivity, strive to maintain gender balance and demonstrate a professional approach to prevent the reproduction of stereotypes. The mass media act as an effective social institution that plays an important role in both the formation and change of gender stereotypes. Their responsible and conscious activities can significantly contribute to ensuring gender equality in society and creating a more inclusive social environment.

## RESEARCH AIM AND FOCUS

The main aim of this research is to examine the influence of mass media on the formation, reinforcement, and transformation of gender stereotypes in modern society. The study focuses on how television, advertising, social networks, and other media platforms shape public perceptions of masculinity and femininity, reproduce traditional gender norms, and affect social attitudes toward gender equality.

This research also aims to analyze the role of media as both a source of gender discrimination and a tool for promoting gender-sensitive values and equal representation. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which media content reflects patriarchal ideas, reinforces stereotypical gender roles, and influences the worldview and behavioral patterns of audiences, especially children and young people.

In addition, the study explores the relationship between globalization, digital transformation, and changing gender perceptions in contemporary society. It investigates how modern media

environments contribute to the emergence of new gender identities and socio-cultural values while simultaneously creating tensions between traditional and modern understandings of gender roles.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a qualitative research methodology aimed at examining the influence of mass media on gender perceptions and stereotypes in contemporary society. The study applies a socio-cultural and media analysis approach to investigate how gender roles are represented and reproduced through different media platforms, including television, advertising, print media, and digital communication networks.

The research primarily relies on the analysis of secondary sources, including academic articles, international reports, books, media studies, and policy documents related to gender equality and media representation. Special attention is given to international legal frameworks and institutional documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and Council of Europe recommendations concerning gender equality in the media.

Content analysis is used as one of the main research methods. Various examples from television programs, advertisements, films, and online media content are analyzed to identify recurring gender stereotypes, symbolic representations of masculinity and femininity, and patterns of discrimination or inequality. Through this method, the study evaluates how media narratives shape public understanding of gender roles and influence social behavior.

In addition, comparative analysis is applied to examine the differences between traditional and modern representations of gender in the media. The research compares historical and contemporary media portrayals of women and men in order to identify the transformation of gender norms under the influence of globalization, technological development, and changing social values.

The study also incorporates elements of discourse analysis to explore the language,

symbols, and narratives used by media institutions when presenting gender-related topics. This approach helps reveal the ideological and cultural meanings embedded in media messages and their impact on public consciousness.

The theoretical framework of the research is based on gender theory, social learning theory, and media effects theory. In particular, Albert Bandura's social learning theory is used to explain how audiences, especially children and young people, adopt behavioral models and gender norms through media exposure.

## MEDIA INFLUENCE ON GENDER PERCEPTIONS

For centuries, people have had stereotypical ideas about the behavioral patterns of men and women, which are still followed by representatives of one or another gender, regardless of their individual characteristics, personal qualities and age. These models of human behavior emerge in the process of socialization, and in this process the media have become one of the most powerful tools of influence. The concept of gender is not biologically determined, but is formed by society and individuals. This means that ideas about gender are constantly evolving and can differ significantly between cultures, countries and generations. Values and ideas about the role of women and men in society are reflected in the information flows disseminated by the mass media (hereinafter referred to as the media). The media are a key factor in the formation and circulation of social understanding in both traditional and modern societies. Therefore, it is argued that the media can be used as a powerful and flexible "tool" to influence people to a certain way of believing and understanding within society. The media play an important role in the socialization process. From cartoons, which are every child's favorite, to reality shows, they all have a huge impact on our lives. Our lives revolve around various forms of media. In addition to providing information about what is happening in the world, it also creates a framework that determines our understanding of the situation around us, and can also limit our creativity and thought processes. Thus, media not only capture our attention, but also set the agenda that determines our actions and thought processes (10). The mass media, acting as

an important mechanism of influence in the formation of public opinion, transmit certain behavioral norms and social constructions of gender roles to a wide audience. The often stereotypical and sometimes discriminatory presentation of the image of women in media content creates the basis for the reproduction and strengthening of gender prejudices at the institutional level. Modern scientific approaches show that gender stereotypes are dynamic constructions that are formed within a socio-cultural context. In this process, the media, acting as one of the main socializing institutions, presents the roles of women and men within certain normative frameworks and through this has a significant impact on the worldview, cognitive processes and behavioral models of individuals.

We can note that the media has a more influential role in the formation of our gender worldview than our family, friends, and teachers for several reasons. First, the media offers hundreds of models, rather than the dozens that young people might encounter among their own families or peers. Moreover, in terms of appearance, self-confidence, and power, media characters are more "attractive" than the average. Second, the media helps to shape norms, both directly through individual models and indirectly through their influence on the values adopted and transmitted by parents, peers, and teachers. Third, the current level of media consumption among young people and adolescents is outpacing the time spent with family, friends, and peers. It is noted that they use media for 4 hours and 44 minutes and 7 hours and 22 minutes, respectively. Finally, although the media is not the only source that shapes gender stereotypes in the process of social learning, it plays an important role in the formation of gender culture and gender worldview. However, an analysis of the gender dimension existing in society shows that the media cannot fulfill its role effectively. Media workers and news producers sometimes unknowingly, without realizing it, and sometimes deliberately, for the sake of gaining ratings, disseminate information that serves to deepen gender stereotypes, and allow distortions in the news that lead to a violation of the gender balance. Recommendation CM/Rec (2011)7 on the concept of new media invites creators, editors and broadcasters of media content to "combat discrimination and stereotypes

and promote gender equality, including relevant professional standards." Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) on gender equality and the media is one of the most important recent documents on this issue. Real democracy requires the equal participation of women and men in society. Democracy and gender equality are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Equal rights and opportunities are the main conditions for the participation of women and men in democratic governance and sound decision-making.

Gender equality refers to the equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of women and men in all spheres of public life, including the media. The results of the conference on "Media and the Image of Women" held in Amsterdam on 4-5 July 2013 were particularly interesting: "By setting clear standards for the media industry, combating the degradation of sexual images, ensuring development [...] and developing and widely disseminating codes of ethical conduct, including complaint procedures, should be ensured." "One of the proposed ways of presenting information was its dissemination on Internet media pages (Müşfiq Ələsgərli, 2019. p.9). The way in which the mass media present the social roles of men and women has a great impact on their social status and, at the same time, forms stereotypes of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in the younger generation. That is why the problem of the social responsibility of the media to society is relevant today, especially in relation to respect for human rights regardless of gender.

#### THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN REINFORCING GENDER NORMS

Gender stereotypes are widely presented in the mass media and are based on socially accepted ideas about male and female concepts of personality. Modern mass communications contribute to the formation of certain behavioral attitudes of the personality by reflecting them in the press, the Internet, radio and television. Gender stereotypes can change in the process of historical development due to changes in roles in society (Белинская Е.П, 2013, p. 2-3). In the era of globalization, the use of mass media, especially the Internet and social networks, has become a

special trend and affects people's lifestyles, and in this direction, it is necessary to specially note the formation of gender sensitivity, gender asymmetry, and gender worldview in society. This is achieved successfully when journalists and advertisers demonstrate objectivity in their activities, correctly reflect gender values and priorities, and present factors affecting gender inequality and ways that will have a positive impact on solving the problem. In modern times, television has the greatest influence on the formation of gender stereotypes. According to research, children who watch television frequently are more likely to engage in gender-stereotypical activities and their views on gender roles are more stable. Since children's information world is quite limited, those who watch television programs frequently and a lot may perceive television as a depiction of social reality and perceive gender-stereotypical information as a complete correspondence to reality. The information that reaches the audience through television channels forms stereotypical images of women and men (Белинская Е.П., 2013, p. 2). We form stereotypes of men and women in our own minds through the mass media. Stereotypes are generally defined as a set of beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups. Thus, gender stereotypes are based on beliefs that certain characteristics, attributes, and behaviors distinguish different sexes. Advertising has a great influence on the formation of these ideas and beliefs in our worldview. Advertising plays a special role in the formation and maintenance of gender stereotypes. Because advertising not only creates the image of the presented object, but also constructs reality with a symbolic system of values (social, moral or family). Gender role models and gender stereotypes are a very attractive tool for advertising creators, because gender resonates better with the audience than other attributes (social or class).

Since the 1950 s, gender stereotypes in the media have also undergone some changes over time. For a long time, the media environment has not only actively reflected existing gender stereotypes, but sometimes even unconsciously supported them. Popular culture, which encompasses not only entertainment, but also the media, determines the direction of the creation of media products that promote certain ideas.

Currently, most of these products are aimed at destroying existing stereotypes and increasing the visibility of women and minorities. Media and entertainment platforms are increasingly moving away from stereotypical views of femininity and masculinity and, on the contrary, are promoting ideas about the uniqueness of each individual, regardless of gender, age, race, religion and other factors. This can be called a positive dynamic, since the existence of stereotypes significantly limits a person's worldview, while the demonstration of different views on life, on the contrary, allows the masses to accept the idea that each person is unique and that it is impossible to judge an individual based on only one specific personality trait. Reactions to gender stereotypes can vary between different cultures and different time periods. This change is possible as a result of changes in public views of the concept of gender. As mentioned, stereotypes are culturally and temporally conditional, and gender stereotypes will also change over time and as cultures change. Gender stereotypes in the media are characterized by four dimensions: gender stereotypes related to physical characteristics, role behaviors, occupational status, and personality traits. Like other stereotypes, gender stereotypes act as a type of heuristic because they facilitate the processing of information and thus require less cognitive effort to process the information. However, this should be compared with the negative effects of exposure to gender stereotypes. One of the negative effects of the formation of gender stereotypes in advertising is its impact on career choices. Adult women are often depicted as housewives, mothers, and wives, and they are associated with household appliances, furniture, and products related to health, cleanliness, beauty, and fashion. Men are usually portrayed as strong and independent, often shown in workplaces and used in advertising for electronics, cars, financial and insurance products, food and beverages. For example, women are more likely to present advertisements related to housework, while men are more likely to present advertisements related to trade and commercial work. Thus, we form an idea in our minds that women should be engaged in housework, and men in business and commercial work. According to A. Lebedev-Lyubimov, one of the main reasons for the excessive use of advertisements is the strong

psychological pressure effect of advertising. The fact that gender roles are also reflected in advertisements involuntarily forms stereotypes in people's minds and puts pressure on their behavior. To give an example of an advertisement, "You are not a dishwasher, you are a woman." In this advertisement, it can be seen that in the current era, doing housework is not only for women, but also ideas exist.

The well-known behaviorist Albert Bandura proposed that television could compete with parents and teachers as a source of role models for imitation. In an analysis of 116 television programs broadcast during prime time on one of the three largest American channels for two weeks by Vandenberg and Streckfuss (Vandenberg & Streckfuss, 1992), the ratio of male to female roles on the programs did not exceed 2:1 (i.e., 65% male and 35% female). Working women are rarely depicted. This creates the idea that men occupy the main positions in the workplace in society. When talking about gender roles in advertising, it would be appropriate to distinguish between public and private media. Thus, public television channels display gender stereotypes less often than private television channels. On private channels, gender stereotypes are presented directly as a means of selling products.

According to Russian researcher N. Atsikhina, the media seem to play the role of a laboratory for the persistence of old ideas and the emergence of new stereotypes. According to the author, stereotypes in journalism were created together with journalism - journalism reflects gender differences by reinforcing the most traditional gender roles in the current society. The author gives an example from an article published in the magazine "Rabotnitsa" and writes: A famous director, political figure, while interviewing a female journalist of the magazine "Rabotnitsa" says: "Since I am considered Asian by nature, a woman is a low-status being for me", "we are writing the Constitution not for women and children, but for serious people, for ourselves". After the publication of this article, there was no reaction in society against this discriminatory article. That is why in many countries it is common for such articles to appear in the media (Ağayeva K.C, 2024, p. 251). An analysis of the main female characters in films and TV series shows that they have undergone a fairly deep

transformation. The gender discourse of modern women on television significantly complicates the process of a girl's assimilation of her gender role and subsequently causes a number of problems in an adult woman due to the lack of a single and harmonious orientation in her consciousness. Russian philosopher T.A. Klimenkova argues that the mass media are a powerful weapon for maintaining "gender bias" as the basis of the patriarchal order. This idea coincides with the idea of J.E. Tickner. Tickner states that in the West the image of decision-makers has always been strongly associated with hegemonic masculine traits.

The mass media has long been instilling in society a distorted image of women, thereby forming negative or false stereotypes. An analysis of films and television series allows us to distinguish two standard male types: the professional man and the head of the family, the homeowner. The role of a professional who thinks about his job is a traditional way of describing a person who has all the qualities that allow him to be called a "real" person (Lawyer, National Security Agent, Police Fighter). Such a man is able to save someone else's life, or, more broadly, risk his life for the sake of national security. Such a type combines traditional male qualities such as strength, intelligence, determination, professionalism, and courage. Another male image presented by the media is the head of the family, engaged in raising children and housekeeping. There are not many such images. Those gender images that the mass media convey to us not only reflect the real picture of relations between the sexes, but also establish a system of these relations. Therefore, stereotypes of femininity and masculinity not only shape people's behavior. They often affect people based on their gender, certain psychological qualities, behavioral norms, occupation, and profession. Gender stereotypes and ideologies are powerful and affect numerous aspects of our psychological functioning, including perceptions, attention and memory, social behaviors, and interests.

#### CONCLUSION

This research examined the influence of mass media on the formation, reinforcement, and transformation of gender stereotypes in

contemporary society. In line with the main research aim, the study analyzed how television, advertising, digital media, and other communication platforms shape public perceptions of masculinity and femininity, reproduce traditional gender norms, and influence attitudes toward gender equality. The findings demonstrate that media functions not only as a source of information and entertainment, but also as a powerful socializing institution that significantly affects individual behavior, cultural values, and collective social consciousness.

The analysis showed that traditional gender stereotypes continue to be widely represented in media content. Women are still frequently associated with domestic responsibilities, emotional sensitivity, beauty, and family-oriented roles, while men are commonly portrayed as strong, independent, authoritative, and professionally successful. These representations contribute to the preservation of patriarchal ideas and create limitations regarding how society perceives the social and professional roles of both women and men. Advertising and television, in particular, were identified as key mechanisms in the reproduction of stereotypical gender norms due to their broad social influence and repeated visual messaging.

At the same time, the research also confirmed that modern media environments have begun to play an important role in transforming traditional gender perceptions. Under the influence of globalization, digital technologies, and changing social values, media platforms increasingly promote ideas of individuality, inclusiveness, and equal participation regardless of gender. Contemporary media content demonstrates a gradual shift away from rigid gender expectations and provides more diverse representations of women and men in professional, political, and social life. In this respect, the study supports the argument that media can serve both as a mechanism for reinforcing inequality and as an effective instrument for promoting gender equality and social change.

Another important finding of the research is the growing social responsibility of journalists, advertisers, and media institutions in shaping gender-sensitive communication. The study highlighted that irresponsible or stereotypical media portrayals may deepen discrimination and

negatively affect the worldview of audiences, especially children and young people, who are highly influenced by media content during the process of socialization. Therefore, the implementation of ethical standards, balanced representation, and gender-sensitive language in media production is essential for building a more democratic and inclusive society.

Furthermore, the research demonstrated that the transformation of gender stereotypes is closely connected with broader socio-cultural transformations occurring in the information society. Media-driven globalization weakens traditional social structures while simultaneously creating new gender models and identities. Although this process may create tensions between traditional and modern worldviews, it also opens opportunities for greater equality, social participation, and cultural diversity.

In conclusion, the study confirms that mass media has a decisive influence on the construction of gender perceptions in modern society. The findings directly support the central argument of the research that media is both a reflection of existing gender relations and an active force in shaping and transforming them. Therefore, achieving gender equality requires not only legal and institutional reforms, but also responsible media practices, media literacy, and continuous efforts to challenge stereotypical representations. Future progress in this field depends on the ability of media institutions, educators, policymakers, and society as a whole to promote balanced and inclusive representations that correspond to the realities and needs of contemporary social development.

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