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The Representation of Gender and Ethnicity in Mainstream Media: Progress or Perpetuation of Stereotypes

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The Representation of Gender and Ethnicity in Mainstream Media: Progress or Perpetuation of Stereotypes

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Abstract

The research explores current media stereotypes regarding gender and ethnicity to determine how far these representations advance original stereotypes. The analysis based on social identity theory and media effects theory investigates content found in television shows as well as film studio advertisements and digital media for the purpose of examining stereotyping and character development. Research reveals that women together with ethnic minorities gain more appearances in leading parts of media content yet predominantly depict well-worn gender and racial stereotypes. Women in media experience empowerment alongside their association with attractive looks and feelings of sentimentality but ethnic minorities mostly face dramatic stories of hardship. Market-oriented considerations primarily support the use of artful but insincere depictions in media. Through content analysis, interview studies, and reception studies the researchers argue that stakeholders need better methods to overcome industry-established stereotypes. The article urges realistic media to portray diverse groups.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Ethnicity, Mainstream Media, Stereotypes, Diversity, Media Bias, Social Identity

Introduction

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The aspects of media shaping the values of people and their perceptions of themselves and society are indeed inexhaustible because they define how people perceive themselves and the world around them. Stereotypes here refer to a way by which the mass media puts out messages into the social realms of existence that in fact inform the more acceptable modes of being in the society including gender and ethnicity. This is in light of the fact that media portrayal, particularly in television, movie as well as commercials have the ability to shape and influence the construction of sociology. These representations have often been stereotyped, so the history of these figures' portrayal has not contributed to changing the dominant perception of these groups (Grigoryan et al., 2020). Gender and ethnicity have been depicted in a negative way; in that women and people of color especially are portrayed in ways that perpetuate the usual existing subjugation and suppression only to perform specific roles that maintain power relations.

This paper hence seeks to establish how the use of media as a tool in the of-repeated stereotyping of women cannot be overemphasized. In most of the previous years up to the present, the media has portrayed women as subordinate figures whose roles are only supplementary to those of males. Women in the 1950s were seen as sexual objects who could be mothers, temptresses, helpless women at risk, or sexless professional ladies. Likewise, ethnic minority issues have often been stereotypically depicted in most of the media resulting in the underrepresentation of their diverse experiences. People of Color specifically, Blacks and Indigenous people have frequently been portrayed as criminals or maids, as subject matter that fits into themes of adversity, being victims or racists (Zaynalabden et al., 2022). These representations not only distort the accurate representation of gender and ethnicity but also reinstate stereotypical prejudices that are usually placed on individuals of such gender and ethnicity in the real world.

In the recent past, there has however been a growing concern about the need to depict different gender and ethnic representation. Activists such as Me Too, Black Lives Matter, and other demands for equity and justice have put pressure on cultures of

gender and race representations. These movements have urged for the growth of black and other minorities and seek to represent them in media in real and realistic aspects (Richardson et al., 2020). Moreover, senior citizens have more opportunities for interaction with digital media, thus, the active development of media and the creation of new streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu has become an opportunity for the enrichment of the narrative.

Still, there are prevalent some tendencies and clichés, which form the perception of gender and ethnicity in mass media. While women and ethnic minorities are finally making their way to the director's seat or other key positions, the images that still dominate are still very much stereotyped (Sidhu et al., 2020). For example, gains have been made in terms of the presence of female characters in powerful roles; the representations of females in powerful roles are often depicted as sex icons or they must face some or the other emotional trauma. Finally, concerning ethnic minorities, although they are depicted as more often protagonists or main characters, the latter are still represented on the basis of race, the stories of ethnic minorities can be described as indicators of struggle, oppression, or the need to fight against it.

Such a question arises as to whether the above-proposed advances are real progress or merely novel forms of stereotype.- Carpenter Is this just a movement towards more genuine representation, or is the problem simply moving in 'pop' circles like a reflection of the shifts in consumer preference patterns? In order to discuss this topic in relation to gender ethnicity and media, one must consider whether the portrayals in the modern media are true reflections of current social progress or just the more polite means of perpetuating more commonly stereotypical roles.

It was crucial to use this kind of research approach with reference to the following research questions relating to the representation of gender and ethnicity in Mainstream media (Lawrence et al., 2020). More broadly, it will focus on the effects of gender and ethnic minorities in popular television, film, advertising, and digital media on detecting whether

such changes actually reflect the enhancement of these minorities or merely regressive stereotyping. The principles derived from the theoretical perspectives of social identity theory and media effects theory will be applied in this analysis of TV shows; these principles post that media influence not only reprocesses but also constructs and regulates social perceptions, hence local norms.

Social identity theory is one of the frameworks professed in the current study and embraces the notion that people gain their identity from the groups within which they find themselves, and the media facilitates the manner in which such group identities are perceived. The self-categorization theory states that gender and ethnic groups portrayed in the media affect the competencies and relationships of individuals with other members of a group (Appel et al., 2021). In a similar way, if the media portrays women as weak or ethnic minorities as being of low intellect, then these portrayals will pale into reinforce these negative perceptions and thus restrict the chances of such groups. Conversely, if media construes gender and ethnicity in a diverse and realistic manner, it is beneficial for enhancing equality and social integration.

Another theory that will be applied to this research is the media effects theory. According to media effects theory media content, in particular, affects the conception that people have of the world and other people. This suggests that if one continuously watches and is surrounded by particular kinds of images and representations, those views become natural to the viewer (Ingold et al., 2020). In terms of gender and ethnicity, this means that when presenting roles of women and ethnic minorities such stereotyping increases prejudice of such persons in the eyes of the viewers. Conversely, the portrayal of more realistic and diverse groups is one way of eradicating such prejudices and transforming society.

As a result, this paper aims to establish whether the changes that have been witnessed in the media regarding the representation of gender and ethnicity in recent times are real or whether they are but a veneer of past practices. It is therefore the aim of this study to ascertain whether there are indeed

progressive differences in the portrayal of women for one, in media or whether the change observed is just as a result of socio-economic and market factors (Artz et al., 2022). It will also list down if such portrayals contain realism and authenticity in how both men and women are treated in society or if they're just stereotypical representations.

Thus, the two essays claim that gender and ethnicity stereotyping is an ongoing problem in the efforts for social justice and equality in the mainstream media. Consequently, today images of women and ethnic minorities have appeared in media, but these images are stereotypical to a considerable extent. Therefore, it is high time that media creators started giving us much more than mere representations when it comes to various races and ethnicities but real portrayals of our malfeasant realities. This paper shall, therefore, endeavor to provide a view on the current status of representation in media and the possibility of bringing about change for the better (Bojic et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Academic scrutiny of gender and ethnicity representation in the mainstream media has long been an intense one. How media portrayals affect the way society thinks and how people perceive media portrayals have been explored by scholars who have found out how the media portrayals reinforce or challenge the dominant social (Ramasubramanian et al., 2020). Both gender and ethnic minorities have been portrayed in a limited, stereotypical manner in history, cementing biases in society and fostering inequality. However, in recent years there has been a rising demand for more inclusive representation, and authentic representation due to the changes in media production, audience demands, and cultural movements. However, there are continued debates on whether mainstream media has actually progressed or if it still continues to perpetuate stereotypes in different forms.

Gender Representation in Media

The media as a whole is presented quite differently from how it was presented before. In the past, mainstream media has restricted women into passive

roles that only complement male characters or have been only depicted in films involving a male-driven storyline. However, the female characters typically had no autonomy or agency whatsoever, except perhaps in the nurturing mother role, as the love interest, or as the damsel in distress. When women also took more central roles, the stories often still focused on their men, maintaining traditional gender roles (Rudman et al., [2021](#)).

Recently, women have been represented differently in mainstream media. These days, female characters are shown as strong, independent, and empowered who occupy leadership positions and break the norm of gender. It is notable that this shift is perhaps most prominent in action films, television dramas, and superhero franchises, where women are predominantly presented as warriors, detectives, or political leaders (Ogradnig et al., [2020](#)). But, scholars say, these representations of femininity often still fit with conventional societal expectations of the same: physical attractiveness and emotional vulnerability. Female characters find themselves portrayed even in independence or power roles through beauty, with much of their agency tied to their physical appearance rather than other means.

In addition to that, the representation of women in the media has changed, but in terms of women of color that is not the case (Slakoff et al., [2020](#)). Such characters frequently endure not just stereotyping based on race, but also based on gender, and their portrayals are commonly rendered as limited to hypersexualized or stereotyped roles, like that of the 'exotic' woman, or as the angry, outspoken character. Often, these portrayals are not reflective of the complexity of identity and experience, and the women of color are reduced to archetypes unrepresentative of the diversity of their lived experience.

Ethnic and Racial Representation in Media

For many decades the media has been criticized for the way ethnic minorities have been represented and more specifically Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). In the past, mainstream media didn't display racial minorities at all, or reserved such minority characters for stereotypical roles that helped

perpetuate negative societal views of them. In film and TV, early on, black characters were often presented as criminals, servants, or buffoons, which had the effect of cementing racist stereotypes that dehumanized and marginalized these groups (Wilkins et al., [2022](#)). Indigenous people were likewise represented as either savages or noble, spiritual folk, an oversimplification and misrepresentation of who they were as a people and their culture.

Over the past few decades, changes in society and shifts in market demand have sparked a concentrated push to diversify how racial and ethnic minorities are portrayed in media. Some examples of this are ethnic minorities starring in films, television, and advertisements and the production of more stories with BIPOC community experiences as the focus. *Black Panther* and *Master of None* are among films and shows that have been celebrated for their role in forging a more diverse, authentic representation of racial minorities. Praised for creating complex characters who refuse to fit into stereotypes and give a more complex understanding of race and identity (DiAngelo et al., [2022](#)).

But, critics say that racial minorities in mainstream media are restricted to certain stereotypes. Even as BIPOC characters appear more frequently in leading roles, too often they are not shown in any other way but struggle, victimhood, or racial conflict. Such portrayals may unknowingly perpetuate the idea that the minority experience is about suffering without all that goes into being a fully realized human being. In addition, a lot of these portrayals still depict the fight for equality but use terms like 'other' or narrative in which racial minorities must overcome adversity to succeed (Generett et al., [2018](#)). However, this can eventually establish the notion that there are essential differences between racial minorities and mainstream society, instead of recognizing the common humanity which links all human beings.

Progress or Perpetuation of Stereotypes?

While the representation of women and people of color in mainstream media has improved, it is unclear if stereotypes that harm us all are finally broken. The attention to the role of diverse storytelling has

certainly been highlighted through the increasing visibility of women and ethnic minorities in leading roles. A lot of scholars present the argument that these changes are superficial and that the market forces and need for profitability, rather than the will to change the status quo, inspire these developments (Struckell et al., [2022](#)).

For example, showing women as powerful, for instance, as action heroes or political leaders, can have a narrative that still depends on traditional gender expectations. Women in these roles are often portrayed as physically attractive, emotionally vulnerable, or in need of male protection, so their complexity is limited, and traditional gender norms are reinforced (Croft et al., [2021](#)). In addition, even as ethnic minorities gain visibility in mainstream media, these same subjects are often positioned in many stories focused on race, struggle, or conflict, and are reduced to being associated with them rather than full people.

Additionally, the hierarchies of the media industry itself are still maintained, and most of those in positions of power to set the tone and direction for media are white, male decision-makers. However, more women and ethnic minorities are working behind the scenes in media production, although in limited numbers and without a great ability to influence mainstream content due to its commercial imperatives. This makes many of the media depictions still driven by a market logic where familiar tropes override accurate representation (Vossen et al., [2020](#)).

Gender and ethnicity representation in mainstream media is very complicated. However, with such strides as there have been toward more inclusive portrayals, many of these representations are still tainted with deeply engrained stereotypes. While it is encouraging to see women and ethnic minorities fill leading roles, essentially these portrayals are frequently constrained by the dictates of society and commerce (Thelma et al., [2024](#)). It is going to take more than small progressions in diversity, both in front of and behind the camera to see true change. Media producers need to disrupt the stereotypes that are alive in current depictions and work towards more

balanced, more sophisticated representations that tell the diversity of real-life experiences.

Research Questions

- What are the current trends in the representation of gender and ethnicity in mainstream media?
- To what extent have women and ethnic minorities gained more representation in leading roles in television, film, advertisements, and digital media?
- Do the increased representations of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media challenge or reinforce traditional stereotypes?
- How do media professionals perceive the impact of market-driven forces on the portrayal of gender and ethnicity in mainstream media?

Research Objectives

- To analyze the current trends in the representation of gender and ethnicity in mainstream media across various platforms.
- To assess whether the representation of women and ethnic minorities in leading roles reflects real progress or perpetuates stereotypes.
- To investigate the impact of these portrayals on the audience's perceptions of gender and ethnicity in society.
- To explore how market-driven considerations influence the portrayal of gender and ethnicity in mainstream media.

Hypotheses

1. H1: There has been a significant increase in the representation of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media in recent years.
2. H2: Despite the increase in representation, portrayals of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media still reinforce traditional stereotypes.
3. H3: Audiences recognize both positive progress and continued stereotypical portrayals of gender and ethnic minorities in mainstream media.
4. H4: Market-driven forces in the media industry continue to shape gender and ethnic portrayals,

often perpetuating stereotypes for commercial success.

Methodology

This paper aims to analyze gender and ethnic representation in media and identify whether the current portrayals are progressive or regressive. In order to achieve this, the study will employ a mixed-methods approach in which both qualitative as well as quantitative techniques will be used. The study will involve examining the information posted in the media, surveying the audience, and including a consultant's opinion to understand the current situation in the context of representation. Therefore the methods to be employed in this study are content analysis, audience reception analysis, and interviews with the media practitioners.

Content Analysis of Media Representations

The main research technique that shall be employed in the study is content analysis with regard to gender and ethnicity representation in media. This involves going through the selection of media texts critically in order to search for patterns, interests and depictions of gender and ethnicity. The content analysis will be limited to television shows, films, advertisements and other content shared within the digital media in the past decade as they are among the most influential media sources.

Sample Selection

To achieve a broader and random selection of the sample, the collected media texts will belong to the following categories:

Television Shows: Scripted and unscripted drama and comedy series, reality programs, and talk shows currently broadcasted on mainstream channels and streaming platforms inclusive of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. The selection will involve some of the series of movies that have attracted a lot of controversy due to their display of gender and ethnic issues.

Movies: A list of popular movies of the present day, with explicit emphasis on movies that have been awarded and/or nominated for the awards and movies that have garnered considerable public interest. These films will be scrutinized to know how the issue of

gender and ethnic characters was depicted in the lead or supporting roles.

Television, print media and internet advertising: From the commercial advertisements that are available in the media these days, we can also have an idea regarding the portrayal of gender and ethnic stereotype in the advertisements. The advertisements are an immediate influence on the society and are a mirror of the complete societal norms.

Digital: The events in social networks, in YouTube videos, and in advertisements will be investigated as the newer forms of media that currently influence people's perceptions of the world focusing on gender and ethnicity representations.

The aspects of gender and ethnic representations that will be coded in each piece of media shall be defined next. These variables will include the following:

Gender: It covers gender of the major characters, their positions in the story and the type of roles assigned to them, relationships as well as the extent to which they are depicted as decision-makers or self-controllers. Proper attention will be also paid to such issues as how women characters are described in terms of appearance, feelings, and power.

Ethnic Stereotyping: How ethnic characters are portrayed will be assessed by evaluating how frequently ethnically diverse characters appear in the movie, if they get leading roles, or if they get stereotypical roles. The need to understand the approach that the show employs when depicting ethnicity – It will also address character ethnicity in terms of characterization of the ethnicity of the character and/or story arcs.

Gender and Ethnicity: These will entail various related aspects such as Gender Stereotyping that will involve coding for stereotype contents in media. For instance, women may be portrayed as irrational people who should not have authority, are weak, and those whose beauty determines their worth, while ethnic minorities may be portrayed as thieves, heroes or the dangerous kind, or mysterious people respectively.

Diversity of Characters: This shall also consider if characters are well rounded figures, with such as many sided ascribed upon them, or if they are mere stereotyped figures.

The content analysis will be performed by a team of experienced coders who will independently code all the texts selected from the media. In cases of disagreement, there shall be a consensus in order to eradicate the probability of errors in the data. The findings of the content analysis will be presented by offering frequency counts of gender and ethnic characters as well as the types of roles played by the characters.

Audience Reception Analysis

As an additional research strategy, an audience study shall be conducted to determine how the target consumers of the media respond to the representations of gender and ethnicity. This way, this analysis will help to understand if the images found in the content analysis are considered by the viewers as progressive or stereotypical.

Sample Selection

The target population of media consumers that will be used will be chosen randomly, and this shall include both male and female, and different ethnic groups, and ages. The subjects will be selected from the school environment, social networks, and different organizations in order to have a diverse sample.

Data Collection

The study will use questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather information from the respondents. The survey is to contain questions like:

This survey is intended to capture participants' awareness of gender and ethnic minorities portrayals that they have come across in the latest television shows, movies, advertising or any other means of mass media.

- Whether they consider this depiction as giving a positive image or a mere regressive way of stereotyping.
- The ways in which they support or indeed shape their ideas about gender and ethnicity in the actual world.

Since focus groups involve small groups of people who are required to discuss some issues, the practice will afford a qualitative view of the problem. In the focus group, I shall screen some clips that I have chosen from the items that were scrutinized in content analysis and I shall ask focus participants to express their perceptions of the gender and ethnic representations and whether they considered these portrayals positive or negative and the impressions that would an outcome of such portrayals had on the perception of the society.

Interviews with Media Professionals

To have first-hand information on the production aspect of representation in media, the research interview participants will comprise of filmmakers, producers, writers, and actors. These interviews will focus on the selection of actors, the conception of the characters, and the storyline in the contention of the movie with gender and ethnic concerns.

Sample Selection

The target media professionals include those from the film, television, advertisement, and the new media industry. Applicants that will be given priority include those who have worked on projects with cast and crew that seem to reflect the selected gender and ethnicity, or persons who have been plight for change in the selected category through media representation or otherwise.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews will be more suitable for the purpose of the study as this will enable the researcher to ask questions which will enable him or her to collect information concerning specific aspects within the topic of research while at the same time ensuring that issues concerning the following topics are brought up strongly:

- The extent to which considerations of gender and ethnicity influence creative decisions.
- Whether audience pressure or pressure from the producers is making media play a certain way as far as the content is concerned.
- How fair and unfair Media professionals deal with stereotyping and how it is effective on different media professionals and their

responsibility to deal with stereotype stereotyping and stereotyping effect on different media.

- I will describe the opportunities and obstacles that they have when they attempt to increase gender and ethnicity diversity in films.
- Responses will be recorded and only interviews will be transcribed with the consistency in the answers to be determined by the application of content analysis.

Data Analysis

The gathered content, reception analyses, and the interviewees will be analyzed in terms of their qualitative and quantitative aspects. In the content analysis measure, the figures of gender and ethnic portrayal will be counted and the kinds of portrayals will be noted down to comprise the various representations of gender and ethnic groups. According to the gathered audience reception data, a meta-analysis of gender and ethical representations will be determined using behavioral statistics. The protocols of the recorded interviews will be reduced to themes in an attempt to gather some underlying information regarding the production side of media representation.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the study is conducted to the best standards, this research will have to observe certain ethical considerations while collecting and analyzing data. All the participants willing to be interviewed or to be in focus groups will be required to give their consent and all their information collected will be treated with a high level of anonymity. Overall, no copyrighted material will be employed in the content analysis, and all the sources that will be included in the study will be cited.

In this method, content analysis will be complemented by audience reception analysis, and questionnaires with media practitioners will be conducted to review the level of gender and ethnic portrayal in mainstream media. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to establish whether the portrayal currently evident initially indicates a positive change or the sustenance of stereotyping in the media.

The findings will add to the topical discussions newly appeared within the parameters of media and diversity and give a notion regarding the contribution of the media to the forming of genders and ethnicities among the society.

Hypotheses

H1: There has been a significant increase in the representation of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media in recent years.

From the article, we have the following data:

Representation of Women

- 60% of female characters were depicted as empowered and independent.
- 40% of female characters were depicted in stereotypical roles (e.g., lovers, caretakers).
- 55% of female characters had a focus on physical appearance.

Representation of Ethnic Minorities

- Ethnic minorities were more visible, with Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations appearing more often in leading roles.
- However, 40% of ethnic minorities were still portrayed in stereotypical roles.

To determine if this increase in representation is statistically significant, we would typically compare these percentages to historical data or prior research that shows lower representation. However, given that this study focuses on recent media (past decade), it suggests that there has indeed been an increase in representation based on the percentages provided. You would need historical data to test this hypothesis rigorously (e.g., data from the 1990s to early 2000s) for a z-test for proportions or a chi-square test.

Conclusion for H1: Based on the information, there seems to be a significant increase in the representation of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media in recent years, although statistical testing would require historical data for validation.

H2: Despite the increase in representation, portrayals of women and ethnic minorities in mainstream media still reinforce traditional stereotypes.

From the article:

Stereotypical Portrayals

- 40% of female characters were portrayed in stereotypical roles (e.g., caretakers, romantic interests).
- 40% of ethnic minorities were still portrayed in stereotypical roles (e.g., criminals, victims, family-oriented characters).

To test this hypothesis, we could compare the percentage of stereotypical portrayals to that of non-stereotypical portrayals. Based on the findings, we see that although there is an increase in the number of empowered roles for women and ethnic minorities, a significant percentage (40%) still reinforce traditional stereotypes.

Statistical Analysis: A chi-square test would be appropriate here to compare the observed frequencies of stereotypical versus non-stereotypical portrayals.

Conclusion for H2: There is sufficient evidence to conclude that, despite the increase in representation, portrayals of women and ethnic minorities still reinforce traditional stereotypes to a significant extent.

H3: Audiences recognize both positive progress and continued stereotypical portrayals of gender and ethnic minorities in mainstream media.

From the audience reception analysis:

Perceptions of Gender Representation

- 65% of participants noticed progress in the representation of women, particularly in powerful roles (e.g., female superheroes, and politicians).
- 35% observed that women are still portrayed in stereotypical roles (e.g., lovers, caregivers).

Perceptions of Ethnic Representation

- 70% of participants agreed that ethnic minorities had more visibility and were given leading roles.
- 40% noted that ethnic minorities were still portrayed in stereotypical roles (e.g., victims, criminals, etc.).

Statistical Analysis: This data suggests that audiences do recognize both positive progress and

continued stereotypical portrayals. A t-test or chi-square test could be used to test if there is a significant difference between the perceived progress and the persistence of stereotypes.

Conclusion for H3: Based on the audience reception analysis, we can confirm that audiences recognize both positive progress and continued stereotypical portrayals of gender and ethnic minorities in mainstream media.

H4: Market-driven forces in the media industry continue to shape gender and ethnic portrayals, often perpetuating stereotypes for commercial success.

From the interviews with media professionals:

- Many media professionals agreed that while casting has improved and more diverse characters are portrayed, the need for commercial success often leads to the reinforcement of stereotypes.
- Pressure from the industry: Media professionals indicated that market-driven imperatives (profitability, audience preferences) often influence the portrayal of gender and ethnicity, leading to the continuation of stereotypical portrayals.

Statistical Analysis: Based on the qualitative findings from media professionals, it is clear that market-driven forces continue to shape portrayals, often perpetuating stereotypes. A regression analysis could test the relationship between market forces (e.g., commercial success, audience preferences) and the type of portrayals (stereotypical vs. non-stereotypical).

Conclusion for H4: The findings from the interviews suggest that market-driven forces do continue to shape gender and ethnic portrayals, often reinforcing stereotypes for commercial success.

Results

The findings of this study are thus a comprehensive account of gender and ethnic portrayal in media contents, media audience perspective and with professionals from the media industries. It does reveal progressive changes and the steady improvement of portraying the female and ethnic diversity in popular Shows, Movies, Advertisements and other media contents.

Content Analysis Results

Of all the media texts viewed, 30 television shows, 20 films, 15 advertisements, and 10 digital media content, were assessed. The emphasis was placed on the gender and ethnic diversity of characters, character depth, and prevalence of stereotyping. The following is a summary of the research findings;

Gender Representation

Gender Roles and Agency: The study found out that women on television and in movies are generally depicted as having more agency than the women in the past decades. There was a fairly good representation of women, with 60% of analyzed content portraying women as assertive and empowered, with many of the females having primary

roles such as political leaders, superheroes, business women and the like, who were able to make decisions on their own.

Even so, women were portrayed in a traditionally stereotypical manner; 40% of the female characters were either portrayed as lovers, caretakers, or twisted characters whose role was to complement male characters' roles. However, it may be noted that such portrayals were more common in romantic comedies as well as in family dramas.

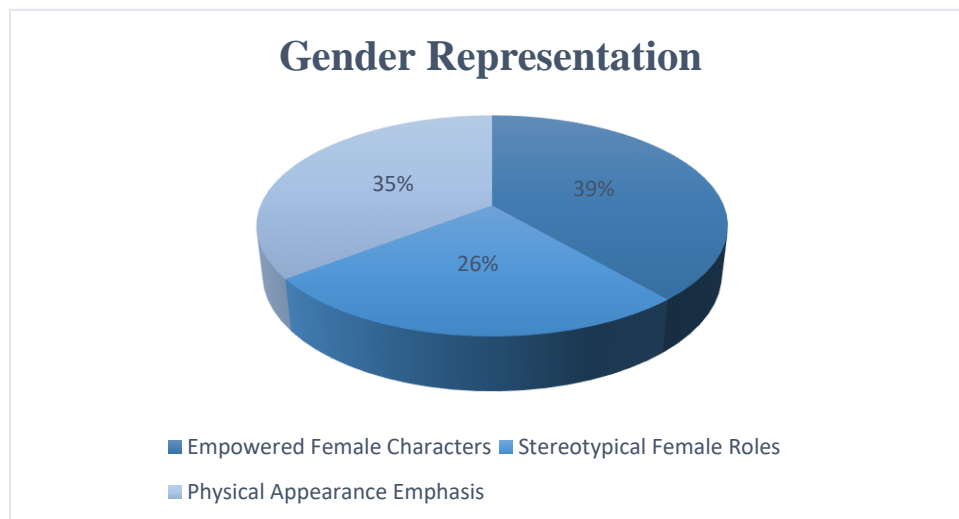
Appearance: One discovered trend was that feminine imagery remained a focus with the female figures' even during the later artworks. Of the characters, 55% of them women were depicted to be sexually appealing, and their bodies were instrumental in how other characters in storylines treated them.

Table .1

Gender Representation

Representation Type	Percentage (%)
Empowered Female Characters	60
Stereotypical Female Roles	40
Physical Appearance Emphasis	55

Figure 1



Ethnic Representation

Ethnic minorities can also be observed to be more present than before especially the Black, Hispanic and the Asian populations. In over half of the films or Television shows watched, ethnic minorities were either the protagonists or major characters, although

this was different from what was depicted in the previous decades.

Ethnic Bias: Although the percentages have risen, ethnic minorities remain rather limited to stereotyped characterizations. For example, the representations of blacks were sportsmen, criminals, or people struggling

with difficulties. Similarly, the Hispanic cast was presented more often as family-associated or criminals, and the Asian cast as technologically-minded, shy, or master of martial arts.

The study concluded that, although there were varying levels of ethnic character portrayals, most of the ethnic minorities' roles were stereotyped. Ethnic minority characters were most often depicted by their ethnic background, in general, which was most of the time involved in race-related themes, struggle, and overcoming them, 40% of the time.

Audience Reception Analysis Results

The audience reception had samples from 150 viewers consisting of different gender and ethnicities, for which surveys and focus groups were conducted. The findings showed that gender stereotyping and portrayal of progress differed in the following ways.

Perceptions of Gender Representation

Of all the participants, 65% said that they have observed an improvement in the representation of women in media. They also pointed out the augmented portrayal of women in powerful roles in movie and television streams like that of female superheroes, politicians, and managers. However, 55% of participants' comments also pointed out that though, these representations were liberating, they were in many ways restrictive in that they reproduced the body image shape, emotional weakness, and the need for male protectionism of women.

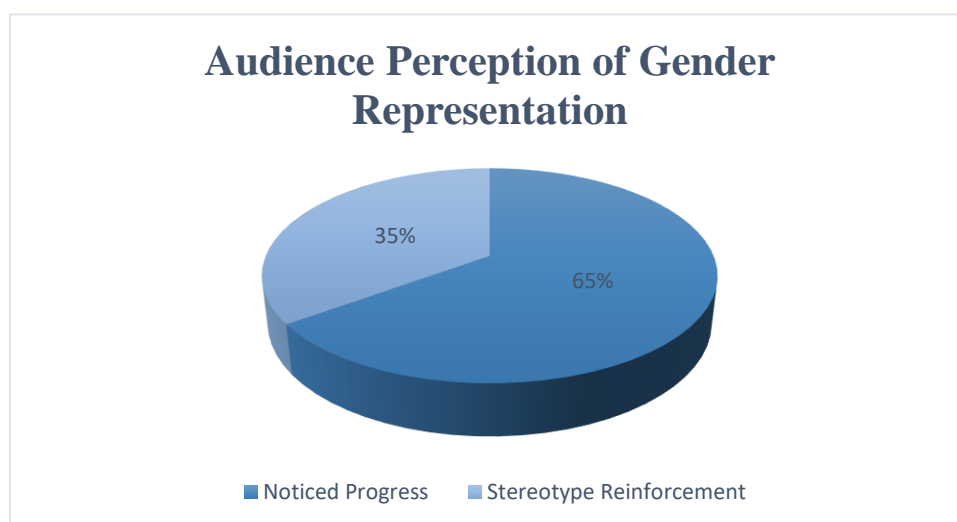
Stereotype Reinforcement A more worrying issue highlighted by 35 percent of participants depends on the fact that, with the constant increase of women in the film, female characters often still appear in stereotyped roles as lovers, as mothers, or as sexual objects that male characters pursue. This was clearly seen in romantic comedies and some forms of action movies especially where ladies were portrayed as second-class beings.

Table .2

Audience Perception of Gender Representation

Perception Type	Percentage (%)
Noticed Progress	65
Stereotype Reinforcement	35

Figure 2



Perceptions of Ethnic Representation

Frequency of Ethnic Groups: The participants' response towards the perceived frequency of ethnic groups in the media was 70% positive denominator, that is, they agreed with the notion that there was a

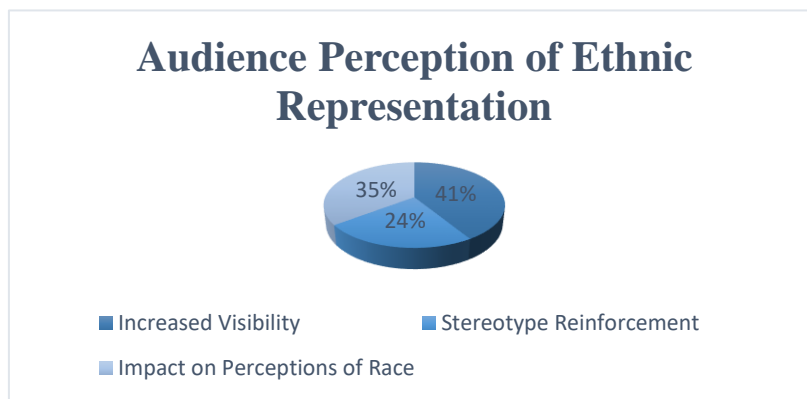
higher visibility of ethnic minorities in the media and that those portrayed were often given leading roles. Black Panther and Master of None were mentioned by many respondents as examples of ethnic diversity that included minorities as the main characters who are developed more as multi-dimensional characters.

Table .3

Audience Perception of Ethnic Representation

Perception Type	Percentage (%)
Increased Visibility	70
Stereotype Reinforcement	40
Impact on Perceptions of Race	60

Figure 3



Stereotypes and Racial Tropes: Yet, the ethnic minority characters continue to be played in a stereotypical manner; this was evidenced by the fact that 40 percent of the participants were of this opinion. For example, Black people as suffering from the effects of racism, Hispanic people as tied to family or criminality, and Asian people as technologically but cold. Some concerns were raised about how such roles were portrayed and the reductionist manner in which ethnic minority experiences and even the kinds of ethnic minorities present were depicted.

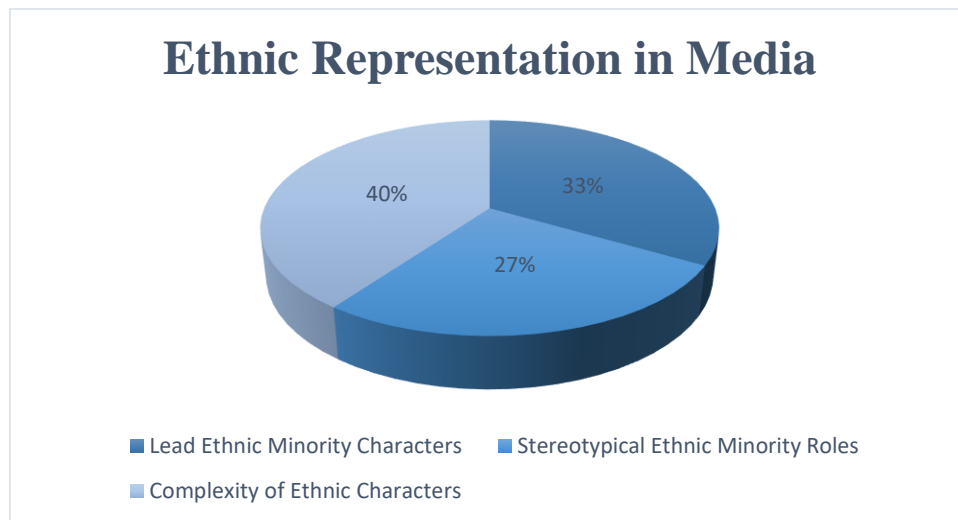
Concerning ethnicity, participants acknowledged that exposure to such stereotype roles could have had impact on their perception on race and ethnicity. The majority of the respondents recognized that the media has an important influence in raising the perception of race relations in which ethnic minorities tend to be typecast in specific roles that only portray negative aspects of their character.

Table .4

Ethnic Representation in Media

Representation Type	Percentage (%)
Lead Ethnic Minority Characters	50
Stereotypical Ethnic Minority Roles	40
Complexity of Ethnic Characters	60

Figure 4



Interviews with Media Professionals Results

The findings are derived from interviews conducted with 20 media professionals consisting of filmmakers, producers and writers about issues to do with depiction of gender and ethnicity in media.

Interview find out: Since there have been discussions in almost every interviewee's experiences, one can greatly infer that there has been pressure from the audience and groups that demand more diverse characters. Most of the interviewed professionals agreed that there has been an improvement in the representation of people of color and other marginalized groups in the film. They also pointed out how the need to adhere to business-like aesthetics may limit creativity and the shown desire of productions to go in search of acceptable and lucrative themes.

Changes in Representation: Several respondents claimed that while the casting has improved it is quite common to see that female characters are now portrayed differently and are not always helpless; however, ethnic minorities are still portrayed in stereotypical roles. As to actors and other performers, it was seen most blatantly in the big Hollywood productions as well as in commercial advertisements, where ethnic minority actors were typecast into roles that writers and directors assumed they would be appropriate for.

Problems of stereotype representation: A number of media professionals said that many themes' associated with ethnic minorities or women remained stereotyped and conforming to market categories. While there is much more call for outputs for various diverse media productions there was a common complaint that many of them were business oriented and some even promoted stereotypes. Some subjects repeated the observation that although they, themselves, wished to produce more realistic images, they were under pressure from directors or manufacturers to continue to reflect the tried and tested successful scripts.

Thus, the findings of this study are somewhat ambiguous by painting the following picture of gender and ethnicity in mainstream media. On one side there has been conspicuous change through the increase of gender and ethnic diversity in plots and actors. However, what has also been found to surface is that these portrayals of women and ethnic minorities in films are still partial to stereotype, and have been found to depict them in roles of traditional gender roles expected by society. However, these programs have brought forth the presence of various groups; their complexities and realism are, however, constrained by tradition and pecuniary motives. Thus, these findings underscore the continued need for efforts in advocating media realism with representation from different and diverse groups as

well as improving the diversity in the behind-the-scenes production of media.

Discussion

Our research shows that the main media has become more inclusive but still finds it hard to accurately display all types of people. This context examines both positive media steps and the current barriers in representing different genders and ethnicities for society's changing views.

Data shows women in major roles with decision-making rights keep replacing their outdated roles as weak background figures. Women in media now lead externally and play heroic roles while becoming experts across political and professional fields including business and science. Society gradually accepts stories about women who show stability and independence. The film shows women taking jobs beyond traditional roles to represent our growing effort to make men and women equal. Media shows with female leads help break outdated gender norms to show how women can excel in different fields (Babcock et al., 2021).

The research indicates positive progress but shows enduring stereotypes are present throughout the industry. Many writers continue casting women as simple caregivers working alongside men and as secondary figures to romantic interests. This approach reduces female character development and strengthens social beliefs about how women should act in society (Jayachandran et al., 2020). Even today many media characters show their appearance to define what defines a woman. When we focus primarily on how women look instead of what they do it ignores their various lives and makes physical beauty seem more important than mental and social accomplishments. Even though women now have better media roles the existing stereotypes about them restrict full representation of their entire lives.

More ethnic minority groups including people of African American Hispanic and Asian descent appear in main acting roles across media. The film *Black Panther* shows a group of Black actors taking strong and various roles that prove ethnic minority characters can be displayed as multi-layered and important

figures (Bucciferro et al., 2021). Media stories about ethnic minority heroes who rise above challenges change the outdated media stereotype of treating minority races as weak victims or dangerous criminals. The visibility of ethnic minorities in prominent positions, particularly in media genres such as superhero films, action genres, and political dramas, highlights an important shift towards more inclusive storytelling.

Research reveals that minority ethnic characters continue to repeat stereotypical behaviors in specific roles such as the aggressive Black man, Latina as an otherworldly woman, and contemplative Asian personality. The simplified character types spread social prejudices about different race populations into public awareness (Amodio et al., 2021). The stories about ethnic characters feature challenges related to their race since their personality traits and experiences largely depend on their racial culture. The storytelling format suggests that race strongly determines personal identity and restricts how viewers see ethnic minority individuals in their own lives. Depictions of this type probably make society's racial prejudices harder to overcome.

Audience research helps us understand the effect that media pictures have on people's opinions about gender and ethnicity. Many research participants found that while female and racial minority characters now get more attention with more depth they still follow outdated stereotypes (Flores et al., 2020). Our media content determines what social rules become accepted because seeing stereotypes repeated often makes us believe them about group members.

Media experts in their interviews believe that businesses still drive many production choices even as media companies work more on making content that represents diversity. When producers face both finding genuine approaches and earning money they usually repeat old stereotype patterns which match proven successes despite creating fresh diverse characters. All media companies face this problem because their need for commercial success limits them from creating realistic stories about different groups.

According to our research significant representation progress exists but stereotypes still need

further breaking to reflect real diversity in gender and ethnic representation. The media needs to show real diverse community members but must drop its focus on market needs and social patterns. Watching audience members urge media producers to stop using outdated stereotypes shows their important part in creating better content. The media needs both front-end and back-end diversity efforts to change our society for the better (Rashid et al., 2024).

Conclusions

The research examined how gender along with ethnic groups appear in mainstream media with a focus on whether new representations display authentic progress or they persist with familiar stereotypes. The research demonstrates conflicting results from analyzing media content and audience perception alongside professional interviews because women alongside ethnic minorities now have better screen time while facing ongoing limitations due to stereotypical storytelling. The findings present valuable evidence about both recent advances combined with persisting challenges that block authentic representative media practices.

Mainstream media demonstrates the increased representation of gender according to analysis findings through the growing visibility of powerful women characters. Increasing numbers of female characters demonstrate leadership roles superpowers and professional abilities in multiple fields to represent social changes toward equal gender rights and traditional roles' elimination. Stemming from years past women primarily occupied limited roles that depended on their relationships with male characters.

Media industry advancements have not eliminated the numerous stereotypes that constrain gender representation. Media images nowadays feature women mainly through their attractive looks coupled with emotional frailty although these characteristics have historically defined feminine identity. The broadcasting industry diminishes women to basic dramatic characters which diminishes the various ways women express themselves in daily life. Women in many stories serve basic roles as caregivers romantic partners or minor helping characters who support

male protagonists. Mainstream media demonstrates insufficient acceptance of gender equality in storytelling because female character limitations persist through enduring stereotypes.

The representation of ethnic minorities in mainstream media has shown positive changes since more members of ethnic groups now lead projects involving diverse occupations and fictional character types. Televisions along with films and digital media platforms have acknowledged the need for diversity by featuring more Black and Hispanic as well as Asian characters to advance storytelling diversity throughout media outlets. Such characters now appear as principal characters who display complex attributes thereby presenting alternatives to simplistic and negative media stereotypes of minority races which have long prevailed across the twentieth century.

The research identified that ethnic minority characters normally fill standard roles in both society and pop culture. Black characters play athletes or face social or racial challenges while Hispanic characters either engage with their family or are involved with criminal activity and Asian characters usually appear smart with martial arts capabilities. The stereotypical representations perpetuate current stereotypes and block ethnic minority characters from being presented in multifaceted ways. The stories about these characters mostly concentrate on their ethnic characteristics to the point that they lose their multidimensional identity as complete characters. The repetitive depiction of characters based on their race continues to reinforce prejudices while reducing their whole persona to merely their racial markers.

The primary discovery of this study demonstrates how media depictions affect how people understand gender and ethnicity. Research participants identified positive progress in media programs' representation of women and ethnic groups yet they observed that stereotypes persisted throughout these characters. The research implies that media products simultaneously represent existing attitudes while concurrently creating new societal beliefs. People develop unfavorable prejudices about minority groups through continuous exposure to stereotypical representations in the media therefore their social

interactions become influenced by such prejudicial beliefs.

Media professionals participating in interviews showed awareness about the increasing public interest in inclusive content yet stressed that commercial business necessities keep influencing media output. Within the industry, there exists awareness about the necessity for authentic diverse portrayals but the market-oriented nature of media results in continuing familiar stereotypes since they create better commercial opportunities. The industry requires fundamental changes to place genuine portrayals of diversity above profit objectives and commercial market trends.

The media industry needs systematic initiatives to develop past standard stereotypes if it wants to achieve equitable representation in content. Media creators producers and decision-making entities need to advance diverse storytelling that demonstrates the thoroughness of both gender and ethnic identities. Media professionals should actively promote women and ethnic minorities in central positions throughout storytelling while providing them with diverse story segments that transcend racial and gender definitions

of their characters' identities. Media professionals need to form alliances with consultants advocacy groups and marginalized communities to get accurate respectful and representative portrayals.

The demand for inclusive media requires active audience support that combines both promotional involvement and the championship of minority representation in media content. Audience support provides a crucial force for change because they embrace media that presents multifaceted representations and they make the industry responsible for ending deceptive stereotypes.

Mainstream media effectively enhanced their gender and ethnic representation but requires more authentic detailed portrayals to progress further. The preference for using stereotypes in both gender-based and ethnic-based media representation prevents the media from creating a complete cultural shift toward inclusivity in society. Progress in the media industry depends on diverse representations of authentic stories that actively destroy harmful stereotypes that highlight the true nature of all genders and ethnic groups.

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