

GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGH THE LENSES OF THE ALBANIAN MEDIA**Women's Studies****Keywords:** gender equality, Albanian media, women status, gender bias.**Joana Kosho****“Aleksander Xhuvani” University. Elbasan. Albania.****Abstract**

Media impact on the society is generally proved. The agenda setting theory describes the power of news media to shape public opinion and to set the public agenda. News media is responsible not only to inform the audience, but also to induct positive social behaviors through its socializing function. In this context, media has a strong impact on women status in the society. Through her news reporting lenses, media can improve the status of the women, or decrease their power, by creating new gender stereotypes and strengthening old ones. This paper examines the gender inequality in the Albanian society and the mirroring effect of the women representation in the mainstream media. Using quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering, media monitoring, interviews and personal observations, it is necessary to explain the role and the impact of the Albanian media in the frame of gender equality and women empowerment.

1. Introduction

“There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”

– *Swami Vivekananda*

“I am not asking for more money. I believe I am very well paid already. I simply want the BBC to abide by the law and value men and women equally”¹, these are some of the words of the ex-BBC journalist Carrie Gracie, taken from the open letter to the public voiced at the beginning of this year. Carrie, a BBC correspondent in China and a 30 year experienced journalist, has resigned from her role as China editor for the gigantic global media, because she discovered that was paid 50% less than her male colleague that had the same job and position as she had. Her resignation and her stance in front of gender injustice has been seen from many women journalists, as an inspiring example of the women empowerment in the quest for gender equality.

What we can learn from Carrie is that gender equality in and through the media is a complex and multidimensional issue. Media does not only perpetuate gender stereotypes, but also reinforce the gender gap that is still present in our postmodern society. How the mass media represent women has a very powerful impact in the opinion making process - in the way the people form and construct their opinions about gender roles in the everyday life.

¹ C.Gracie, “Enough is enough’: Carrie Gracie’s letter on pay inequality in full”, The Guardian, January 08, 2018. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jan/08/carrie-gracie-letter-in-full>. [Accessed: March 08, 2018].

The media cannot be balanced and constructive toward the gender issues, if behind the scenes, the women journalist are less paid or in a lower status than the men are.

How the media deals with the gender issues, is a model that reflects the way the society stands for gender equality, reflects how the men see their wives and girlfriends, how the male CEOs behave with the women employers or businesswomen partners, and how the women see themselves according to confidence, success and trust. The right implementation of the women role not only in the communication sector, but in every life's area, is crucial for the wellbeing of the whole society.

Albania, as a country in the process of European Integration and in the process of building its capacities to cope with human rights, media freedom, and gender equality, still needs to make improvements in all this areas, especially in gender equality, strengthening its mechanism to balance and soften gender gaps in salaries, social status and media's representation. According to the last, but not the list, the environment of the media industry, the gender roles, their exposure in the media and their public importance, has a major importance to be scrutinized, analyzed and brought to the focus, with the main purpose to underline the areas that need improvement and the parts that should subside.

The focus of this study is to shade light on the gender situation in the Albanian media industries, looking at the way media represents women and exploring the women status behind the lights of the mainstream media. Through consulting the latest studies and articles about gender issues and my own media monitoring, I will attempt to describe how media broadcast on gender roles can impact the women status in the Albanian society.

2. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is both quantitative and qualitative, including data gathering from literature and previous studies in the field, personal monitoring of the media, interviews, data analyzing and personal observations. The quantitative approach to the problem was focused on the data gathering from surveys and statistics that showed the global situation of the women in terms of gender equality and gender stereotypes, and the woman status in local level (Albania). Media monitoring and data analyzing were necessary to describe the representation of women in the media, with the key study: Albanian media. Interviews, data analyzing, personal observation and synthesis of the data gathered were part of the qualitative approach to the problem.

3. Still Talking about Gender (in)equality?

Before going in depth in the Albanian media environment in the context of gender equality and media role, it is necessary to look at the issue in a global level: how is the woman seen, how is she evaluated and what about the gender gap? The Global Report on the Status of Women in the News

Media, of the International Women’s Media Foundation, for the year 2011², stated that the gender gap is a big problem worldwide, when researchers found that 73% of the top management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women. According to this report, among the ranks of reporters, men hold nearly two-thirds of the jobs, compared to 36% held by women. However, among senior professionals, women are nearing parity with 41% of the newsgathering, editing and writing jobs. The Global Report on the Status Women in the News Media had examined more than 500 companies in nearly 60 countries and had shown that men occupy the vast majority of the management jobs and news-gathering positions in most nations included in this study.

The 2017 Gender Gap Index Report, reported that³: the gaps between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remain wide: only 58% of the economic participation gap has been closed—a second consecutive year of reversed progress and the lowest value measured by the Index since 2008—and about 23% of the political gap, unchanged since last year against a long-term trend of slow but steady improvement.

In 2016, a newsroom survey from the American Society of News Editors found that about a third of newsroom employees were women, as were 37 percent of newsroom supervisors. Meanwhile, advocacy groups worldwide have spoken out against the news media’s portrayal of women and its over-reliance on male experts. The Women’s Media Center, for example, released an analysis in 2016 showing that most of the political analysts who appeared on CNN, FOX and MSNBC to comment on the U.S. presidential election were men⁴.

In the study conducted by Policy Department C: Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, for the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, the key findings were not surprising (January, 2018)⁵. Although in the focus were important member states like Austria, United Kingdom, or Sweden, with a high level of the implementation of the human rights and with a substantive democracy, the study reveals that the European media industries are still characterized by a significant gender pay gap, gender-based discrimination, and sexual harassment.

² International Women’s Media Foundation, “Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media”, International Women’s Media Foundation, IWMF, 2011.
Available: <https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/IWMF-Global-Report.pdf> [Accessed: March 05, 2018].

³ World Economic Forum, “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017”, The World Economic Forum, Insight Report, 2017. Available: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf [Accessed: March 28, 2018].

⁴ D. M. Ordway, “Women in news: A collection of research”, Journalist’s Resource, 2017.
Available at: <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/news-media/women-in-news-female-journalists-research>. [Accessed: March 18, 2018]

⁵ European Parliament, “Gender Equality in the Media Sector”, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Women’s right and Gender Equality, Study, 2018.
Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2018\)596839](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)596839). [Accessed: March 23, 2018]

Women are also under-represented in the workforce across media sectors, especially at decision-making levels and in the governing bodies that influence media policy. According to data from the European Institute for Gender Equality, in 2017, women accounted for only 35% of CEOs and board members in public broadcasting companies across the EU-28 (from 0% in Poland to 64.3% in Lithuania).

The figures for news reporting are better, but on average women still represent a minority (40%) of news reporters across the 22 EU countries surveyed by the GMMP and are less likely to be assigned to more prestigious ‘hard’ news stories in areas such as economics (39%) and politics (38%). A new study commissioned by the European Parliament also highlights a number of concerns expressed by women working in the media industry, including discrimination in pay, hiring, and promotion, lack of work-life balance measures, sexist working cultures, including ‘normalization’ of sexual harassment and bullying, and the absence – or ineffective enforcement – of codes of practice and regulations.

What is the gender equality situation in the Balkans? What are the gender norms in the Western Balkans at regional and national level? The Helpdesk Report of the K4A (Knowledge, evidence, and learning for development), conducted a study for the Gender norms in the Western Balkans (Helpdesk Report, March 2017), where the main findings are⁶:

Women's political participation: All countries have a gender quota and there is quite strong policy in place for women's representation, but this is not always adhered to. Participation is still low, around 15-35 per cent. Women do not occupy decision-making or powerful positions. Serbia has the highest proportion of women in parliament – 3 %. Training, mentoring and forming cross-party women's groups have all been successful in increasing women's representation.

Violence against women and girls: VAWG is prevalent and legal protections and services are weak. Domestic violence is perceived as a common problem in the region. Some of the literature identifies violence against women and girls as connected to violent conflict.

Women and work: Women are formally employed much less than men. Traditional gender roles prevail. The labor market is around 37 per cent women. Women earn less and do not occupy high level positions.

4. Gender Gap in the Albanian Society

Since 1993, Albania is part of the Convention “On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW), in order to prevent gender inequalities, as well as to ensure wisely the protection of women from discrimination in higher levels.

⁶ E. Browne, “Gender norms in the Western Balkans”, Helpdesk Report, March 2017. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/058%20Gender%20in%20the%20Balkans.pdf>. [Accessed: April 30, 2018].

Other Albanian legal acts, as The Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the law no. 10 221/2010 “On Protection from Discrimination”, the law no. 9970/2008 “On gender equality in the society” etc., intend to protect women, to prevent gender discrimination and to ensure gender equality⁷. Moreover, since the Global Leaders’ Meeting, Albania adopted the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Action Plan 2016–2020 in October 2016, with the aim to consolidate efforts by all institutions to advance the goal of gender equality.

In line with Law No. 27/01/2014, AMA adopted the Broadcasting Code, which aims at regulating the audio and visual activity, almost in all its range. The Albanian media is reflecting, up to a certain extent, the problems that today concern the Albanian women, such as the possibilities for education, employment, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc⁸.

Although there are many laws and strategies for gender equality and on the protection from discrimination, the reality of the women does not reflect much the legal and political perspective. The women status in every dimension of social, economical and political life is not equal with the men status. Neither numerically nor qualitatively, women are not engaged enough in important positions in the media hierarchy, in the Government, in administration or in the academic structures.

The gender situation in Albania is not so different from the Balkan or European states. The annual study of INSTAT (Albanian Statistics Institute) for the Women and Men in Albania, represents the roles held from both genders in the society. The main purpose of the publication is to present sex disaggregated data aiming that all statistics should not only be collected, analyzed and presented by sex, but should also reflect the gender issues of society, in order to monitor policies in the context of achieving gender equality. The main findings are⁹:

Education: The number of graduates in tertiary education during 2016 was 31,500 students, and the ratio was 63.8% girls and 36.2% boys. Regarding the academic staff, it is obvious that woman is dominant in the lower and middle cycle of education. Regarding the higher education, the higher the title and degree the higher the number of men in the academic staff. Meanwhile, the data from Rectorates of Public Universities indicate that there is only one female Rector.

⁷ E. Osmanaj, “Gender Equality-Legal Reality in Albania”, *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May-August, pp. 268-273, 2014.

⁸ Audiovisual Media Authority, “The Decision on Adopting the Audiovisual Media Authority Code of Broadcast”, AMA Decision, January 27, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://ama.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Broadcasting-Code-of-AMA.pdf>. [Accessed: May 02, 2018].

⁹ Albanian Institute of Statistics, “Women and Men in Albania”, INSTAT Report, 2017. Available: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2316/burrat_dhe_grat__ne_shqiperi_2017_libri.pdf [Accessed: May 07, 2018].

Labor force participation: Considering the inactivity reasons, generally speaking women remain outside of the labor force due to retirement and early retirement (40%), and the engagement in domestic chores (21.5%). On the other hand, men's engagement in domestic chores is only 1%. Referring to the age group 15-64, 42% of women are outside the labor force, compared to 26% of men.

Employment and employment structure: Employment rate for the population of age group 15-64 is 62% for men and 50% for women. According to the employment structure, 43% of women are employees, whereas 31.2% are contributing family workers compared to 18.2% of the same category for men. A considerable number of employed men (38.3%) are own account workers, as compared to 24.4% for women.

According to studies that compare the official statistics of the women employment, the results show that a man in Albania in 2012/2013 had a 46% chance of being employed, while a woman had a 22% chance. According to these values, a man in Albania was almost 2 times as likely to be employed as a woman (46.1% compared with 22.2%)¹⁰.

Women participation in decision-making: As INSTAT stated (2017), from 2013 to 2016, the increasing trend in the number of women and girls in parliament has continued due to the replacement of men MPs with women MPs given the resignation of men from their mandates. Due to this replacement, 24% of the Parliament in 2016 was composed of women. Among the eight parliamentary commissions, the highest participation of women is in the “*Commission on Labor, Social Affairs and Healthcare*”, with approximately 50%, whereby a series of laws and initiatives affecting the economic empowerment and support of women through social policies are discussed.

5. The Representation of Women in the Albanian Media

As we explored the global/local reality of gender (in)equality, the social status of the women, although with some improvements, still needs further support and evolution.

Media texts are perceived to be one of the prime cultural sites through which it is possible to study the position of women in society. This is where our society presents itself publicly, defines our identity for us, establishes the parameters of consensus and relegates what is perceived as unconventional to the margins. Worldwide studies on the representation of women, based on a variety of methodologies and of media (television, cinema, magazines, newspapers, radio, advertising, computer games), suggest similar frameworks of gender discrimination. As Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross (2004) suggested in their co-edited book, women are mostly relegated to the private sphere and to the emotional and sexual worlds¹¹.

¹⁰ Th. G. Pereiro, “The Determinants of Female Employment in Albania”, presented at the 7th International Scientific Conference “Economic Policy and EU Integration”, ‘A. Moisiu’ University, Durrës, Albania, 2016.

¹¹ K. Ross and C.M. Byerly, Eds., *Women and Media: International Perspectives*, Blackwell Publishing, 2014.

In her study about women presentation in the Armenian media, Anna Davtyan-Gevorgyan, underlines the role of the media in cresting stereotypes about men and women, shaping public opinion in this context. As Davtyan-Gevorgyan argues, femininity is culturally and socially constructed by the family, education, the public, and to a larger extent, the media. In this respect, the long-term change in women's images in media could help change the perceptions and stereotypes women face in a society¹². So, it is widely accepted that mainstream media are social agents that can shape and change how the societies deal with the issues of human rights and gender equality.

According to Dasara Dizdari-Zeneli's analysis, Albania clearly falls among the countries with a high media density, thus constituting an interesting case in terms of the relationship between media and society seen through the lenses of major social changes that the country has gone through over the recent decades¹³.

To understand the way the women are presented and represented in the media, it is very important to rely in some of the most serious studies and media monitoring. The Women's Network Equality in Decision Making with the support of National Endowment for Democracy, has conducted a wide range monitoring of the Albanian media, focused on the study of the status of women and girls in Media. This study had in focus media monitoring of the daily national and local media during one month (1 June 2016 - 30 June 2016), including 10 TV channels, local and national (News, Morning TV Shows and evening Talk Shows), 5 newspapers and 8 online media, analyzing the women participation and portrayal in the Albanian Media, based on sources, guests, hosts and topics.

The results of this monitoring show that¹⁴ 60% of the women and girls dominate the participation in media on morning broadcasting TV shows. The women percentage was composed by: 73% women experts, 6% public figures and 9% youth. Women and girls speak about social, education, culture, lifestyle and health. Men and boys speak about politics, economy, international issues and infrastructure.

¹² A. Davtyan-Gevorgyan, "Women and Mass Media", Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation, Feminism and Gender Democracy, 2016. Available at: <http://www.feminism-boell.org/en/2016/04/08/women-and-mass-media>. [Accessed: April 12, 2018].

¹³ D. Dizdari-Zeneli, "Issues related with Human Rights, Discrimination, and Gender Equality in the Albanian News Media", United Nations Development Program, Albania, 2013. Available at: <http://www.al.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Manual%20media%20english.pdf> [Accessed: April 25, 2018].

¹⁴ National Endowment for Democracy, "Gender and Media in Albania", Women's Network Equality in Decision Making, EDM, 2016. Available at: http://www.platformagjinore.al/eng/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Media-Monitoring_Gender-and-Media-in-Albania.pdf [Accessed: April 28, 2018].

Men and boys (79%) dominate the expertise on evening broadcasting shows in Albanian media. The 21% of the women and girls participating in evening talk shows is composed by 38% of women experts, 50% of women politician and 12% others. Women and girls speak only 26% in talk shows, when the men monopolize the conversation with 74%.

According to the sources of information, men and boys are dominating the TV news sources during the evening broadcastings in the Albanian media. Only 12% of women and girls are the focus of TV news stories, meanwhile men and boys are widely present with 55%.

What about the newspapers? Who dominates the headlines? The results of the study¹⁵ show that the large part of the first page stories are dominated from men and boys with 49% and 0% from the women and girls. Only 4% of the women are the source of the information of the headlines and 49% are men and boys. The images of the first pages of the newspapers show women and girls on 14% of the cases and 86% of the images have in focus men and boys. *Who speaks on the newspapers?* Only 6% of the newspapers stories are focused on the women and girls and 53% of them on men. The sources of the news are 6% women and 46% men, while 39% of the journalists are women and girls and 61% men and boys.

Online media situation: According to the study of The Women's Network Equality in Decision Making, only 6% of the online sources are women and girls, 33% are men and boys. 13% online media stories are about women and girls and 43% among them are about men. According to the images in online media, 25% of them show women and girls, while men and boys dominate the online media images with 75%.

Another study by Isida Hoxha, (Luigj Gurakuqi University), shows the discrimination of the women in Albanian press. She monitored some the Albanian newspapers during October 2012 and the key findings were¹⁶:

First, the largest number of articles, published in newspapers, represented women with use of existing stereotypes in Albanian society. The cases that media chose as news were those related to accidents and deaths. The stereotypes created by society are strengthened by the way the media discourse is structured.

Second, there were numerous articles that related to a symbolic women's representation. In those articles, the women are not represented as victims, but as somebody's wives or somebody's relatives. This symbolic role is seen in the discourses of political leaders as well.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ I.Hoxha, "The representation of the Woman in the Media Discourse in Albania", *Journal of Social and Natural Sciences*, Volume 10, Issue 1, pp. 146-151, 2016.

From a personal monitoring of the Albanian media, during the period of one month (March-April, 2018), including some of the mainstream televisions, newspapers and online media (TV: Top Channel, TV Klan, Ora News; Newspapers: Panorama, Tema, and Dita; online media: 360° and Lapsi.al), I concluded that only a small percentage of the stories were dedicated to women and girls. The main political, economic and financial news had in the focus men and boys rather than women and girls. Topics like lifestyle, gossip and cultural news had in focus more women than men, but the women presented in this kind of news were sexualized and used as a tool to attract the audience than promote their success or their expertise.

There was a slight difference between TV stations, newspapers and online media. The main distributors of gender stereotypes were online portals, where titles as: “Trump's old girlfriend undressed, was covered with dollars: photos” (360°, 11 March 2018); “Deputy’s wife gets naked, she gets all surprises for her statement” (360°, 12 March 2018); or “The 30-years old obsessed to sex: I was tempted to kill myself” (Lapsi.al, 15 March 2018); “Five legends for the female orgasm” (Lapsi.al, 19 March 2018), point to a disrespectful way of presenting women in the media. But even televisions and newspapers had issues with the gender stereotypes and inequality.

6. Gender Bias in the Media: *what can be done?*

The media is a prism through which we see those in power. In many cases, media not only reflects inequalities between men and women but also amplifies and entrenches them. With women the focus of only 10% of news stories, the political sphere all too often features men talking to men about men¹⁷. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project 2015, (GMMP), which has been looking into the place of women in the news media every five years since 1995, women are the focus of only 10% of news stories, comprise just 20% of experts or spokespeople interviewed, and a mere 4% of news stories are deemed to challenge gender stereotypes. The project found that only in Europe, women accounted for only a quarter of the people we see or read about in the news¹⁸.

If there are more men than women in the media hierarchy and if we see more experts and successful men than women through media, we are doomed to create a false perception about gender role and generate more and more gender stereotypes.

¹⁷ J.Casserly, “How the media can promote gender equality”, *The Guardian*, Oct 26, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/oct/26/more-hillary-less-donald-how-the-media-can-promote-gender-equality>. [Accessed: April 29, 2018].

¹⁸ Global Media Monitoring Project, “Who Makes the News?”, World Association for Christian Communication, WACC, 2015.

http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf [Accessed: April 30, 2018].

As *Josephine Casserly* (BBC Media Action) expressed in one of her articles that¹⁹: “What we see on-screen matters for what happens off-screen. There’s no shortage of evidence demonstrating that who we see in power influences how we see ourselves. When politics is portrayed in the media as a man’s game, it’s no coincidence that progress towards women’s equal participation in politics is excruciatingly slow”.

According to the Eurobarometer poll published in November 2017, a high number of European citizens are aware of the gender inequality in their country or society. Over half (54%) of all respondents to the poll felt that there is a problem with the way women are presented in the media and advertising in their country. However, there were considerable differences, with the figure ranging from 71% in France, 70% in Sweden and 69% in Spain to 22% in Bulgaria and Latvia. Men were much less likely than women to say that there is a problem (48% vs 59%), and even less likely to say that it needs to be addressed (33% vs 45%)²⁰.

What can be done to improve gender equality and increase women empowerment?

In the practice briefing from the BBC Media Action’s governance programming, Josephine Casserly, argues that looking through a gender lens, media can amplify women’s voices and provide a platform for them to hold their leaders accountable. Moreover, it can put gender issues on the political agenda and influence those in power to uphold women’s rights.

Media can also challenge the norms which restrict women’s role in public life, empowering women to participate in their communities. There is a body of evidence which demonstrates how media can challenge gender stereotypes among its audiences.

Valbona Sulçe (Kolgeci), in her study “Equality starts in the media” (2015), underlines the importance of the media in gender equality, reducing the gender stereotypes and evaluating the women status in the society. According to Sulçe: If people will constantly see women portrayed as victims of violence and not as successful models, they will consider the woman as inferior, as the “fragile sex”. If the audience will see that women discuss only about the kitchen, fashion and children, it will be difficult to admit that women can be managers, directors, politicians, president, police, and so on. What we consume from Media affects how society shapes the gender roles²¹.

In a personal interview with Valbona Sulçe, an expert in media issues and gender stereotypes, has expressed her concern about the level of the awareness that media has about gender equality.

¹⁹ J.Casserly, “Turn up the volume: empowering women through media. Lessons from BBC Media Action’s governance programming”, Practice Briefing 02, BBC Media Action, October, 2016.

²⁰ R.Shreeves, “Spotlight on gender equality in the media and digital sectors”, European Parliamentary Research Service Blog, March 7, 2018. <https://epthinktank.eu/2018/03/07/spotlight-on-gender-equality-in-the-media-and-digital-sectors>. [Accessed: March 30, 2018]

²¹ V.Sulçe (Kolgeci), “Equality Starts in the Media. A guide to a gender perspective reporting”, USAID Assist Impact, 2015.

Valbona has conducted many studies on gender equality and she found that: “*the women in the media are badly-represented and under-represented*”. When asked about the link that exist between media representation and society perceptions, Sulçe admits that such a connection is strong and real. “If the media justifies the violent actions of a man against a woman with old common codes, citizens receive the message that this kind of behavior is acceptable. Stereotypes are still strong in society about women's status, gender roles, etc. It is the duty of the media to challenge them and to show the change when it happens and how to make the change when it delays,” – says Sulçe.

How to create more equality between genders? Colette Davidson, a senior journalist at WAN-IFRA (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers), recommends some rules or guidelines to be taken into consideration creating gender balance in the newsroom, in the news and TV shows. In her opinion, there are five strategies for creating gender equality in the media²²:

1. *Include news about and for women.* This is not just about covering “women’s issues”. It’s about making sure content is balanced across gender lines and respects the diversity that represents nearly 50% of the world’s population.

2. *Make sure there is a strong commitment from management.* Content alone can only do so much to promote gender equality in the newsroom. If management isn’t committed to guaranteeing diversity, initiatives can quickly crumble. That’s why a top-down approach is essential.

3. *Make sure women occupy all roles in the newsroom, including senior positions.* No matter how much content a media outlet publishes for and about women or how committed management is to creating gender equality, if there isn’t a physical representation of women in the newsroom, having a balance is impossible. Not only that, women must be represented on all levels – not simply filling low-level research or editorial roles.

4. *Create pay equality.* While some aspects of gender inequality can be abstract and difficult to quantify, the gender pay gap is a pointer to inequalities taking place in the media.

5. *Increase skills and leadership abilities through mentoring and development programs.* Ensuring that women have the confidence and skills they need to move up the job ladder is part and parcel of creating gender equality in the newsroom. While talent and on-the-job experience certainly helps, mentoring and development programs are a way for more experienced professionals to boost the careers of women whose skills may not yet be fully realized.

²² C.Davidson, “Five strategies for creating gender equality in the media”, The Guardian, Jul 20, 2016. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2016/jul/20/five-strategies-creating-gender-equality-media>. [Accessed: April 18, 2018].

Journalist, experts and the media's people can do so much more to respect and construct the woman social status. As Sulçe expressed: "Journalist should report on a gender perspective, meaning to understand the differences between women and men, to leave behind the stereotypes and the clichés, to focus more on the context and causes of the problems rather than the consequences, to let go the sensation of the day, to be stand up for the dignity of women and girls, respecting them and not considering them as objects. To continuously enrich the vocational training with new research techniques that take into account the gender perspective"²³.

7. Conclusions

Studies show that media is used from the society as a mirror: you cannot be someone (or do something) that you don't see. If the gender roles are not reflected in the media with a balanced and objective tone, in a realistic and supportive approach, the citizens, the public opinion, the audience will be misguided and uninformed, increasing in this way gender stereotypes, domestic violence and women discrimination. If women's voices are not heard, decisions often fail to meet their needs and may even serve to deepen gender inequality. Women empowerment is not a feminism cause, but an important step in the evolution of our global society.

In a global level, data show that women are under-represented in media's content and the decisions that affect their lives. Although many discussions, laws, programs and platform are constructed to raise awareness on gender equality, to fight women misrepresentation and soften gender pay gaps, still across the world, and across all media types, women remain significantly underrepresented in the media workforce, particularly at decision-making levels. They remain less visible overall in media content but, when present, their portrayals too often conform to sexist tropes.

The official statistics show that the women in the Albanian society are underestimated, underpaid and not represented accordingly in political and economical higher levels. Official data reinforce the gender gap in the Albanian society. Considering the inactivity reasons, generally speaking women remain outside of the labor force. Referring to the age group 15-64, 42% of women are outside the labor force, compared to 26% of men, meanwhile the employment rate is 62 % for men and 50 % for women. In the newsrooms, women are not positioned in higher level of the hierarchy and often are underpaid compared to men for the same job.

Women in the Albanian mainstream media are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or less valuable. Through many studies and media monitoring, the key results show that men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Unfortunately, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women.

²³ Personal interview with Valbona Sulçe Kolgeci, on April 28, 2018.

The data gathered from mainstream media monitoring, only a small percentage of the stories were dedicated to women and girls. The main political, economic and financial news had in the focus men and boys rather than women and girls. Topics like lifestyle, gossip and cultural news had in focus more women than men, but the women presented in this kind of news were sexualized and used as a tool to attract the audience than promote their successes or their expertise. Men and boys dominate the expertise on evening broadcasting shows and the headlines in Albanian media. Women and girls speak only in talk shows, when the men monopolize the conversation. According to the sources of information, men and boys are dominating the TV news sources during the evening broadcastings and the newspapers stories in the Albanian media.

All the studies and monitoring showed that the link between women status in and through media and the way society treats women is strong and impactful. All the data collected show that the gender stereotyping in the media and advertising can propagate harmful attitudes about masculinity and femininity, gender roles and the status of women in the society – this can perpetuate discrimination, sexual objectification and gender-based violence. Limiting or positive messages and role models conveyed in the media also matter because they influence both girls' and boys' perceptions of their own abilities and the directions they take in life.

The picture of Albanian society and gender roles through media lenses need to be improved and differently represented. Not only law-makers or decision-makers, but also journalist and media experts need to unite their efforts to balance gender roles and soften gender gap. More responsibility needs to be asked from all the actors and factors in the mainstream media, about the right representation of the women, without stereotypes and underestimation, but with a wholehearted respect and accountability.

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