Tools for Progress: How the Media Impacts Gender Equality

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# Abstract

Gender inequality is still present as it was over 100 years ago when women in the United States were fighting for their given right to vote, a right that was stolen from them by the grips of a male figure. However, with social media, the potential to oppose gender inequality is present. Social media is a modern tool that has the ability to bring different groups together to fight against gender inequality. Social media permits this linkage, especially when the awareness of kidnapping and abduction targeting females is now more present than ever. This raise in awareness motivated the question, is there enough evidence to stay that social media majorly impacts the progress of gender equality?

Different sources implement the evidence that social media strongly influences the progress in gender equality by introducing the TIGER program, statistical data explaining the high distressing rates of misogyny, the limits of social media in gender-related issues, and the evidence for why social media is the best tool at the moment. Through these sources, the evidence solidifies to conclude that social media considerably impacts the movement of gender equality.

*Keywords:* Gender inequality, Gender, Social Media

# Tools for Progress: How the Social Media Impacts Gender Equality

Social media has emerged as an essential communication medium in our civilization. Nonetheless, before social media became a crucial device in society, radios, and newspapers were as significant. Therefore, the media performs an influential role in society, even more on social issues like gender equality.

Gender inequality has always been present in the world during all eras. Although society has made progress towards gender equality, there are still steps to gender-equal society that society still has to take. Through documented historical data, there has been evidence of gender inequality throughout different eras and civilizations in the world. However, through awareness of gender inequality in our society, there have been efforts to promote gender equality. Nonetheless, these efforts may not be enough to end gender disparity. There are steps left to take for a gender-equal world. Therefore, we need the most powerful tool, social media, in our society to increase knowledge, formulate courage, and have the change the world needs.

Moreover, in historical events, the traditional has played a crucial role in formulating the feeling towards a particular movement. According to Jr Thorpe's article, "How Were Suffragettes Treated By The Media?" Jr Thorpe (2017) states that "Pro- and anti-suffrage arguments were put forward in their own publications." In his article, he presents a large number of negative criticisms about the women's suffrage. Nonetheless, there was a significant amount of support in the media to promote women's suffrage. Therefore, there is a justification for the essential role of traditional media in the historical context of the suffrage movement for women to come together and fight for equality. As more progressive movements towards gender equality occur, the need for progressive tools, like social media, increase. Therefore, there is a justification for the vital role of media in the progression of the women's suffrage movement.

Moreover, with the justification for the usage of social media, as more progressive movements towards gender equality occur, like the Women's March in 2017, the need for social media increases. Therefore, in the present world, the use of social media is crucial to the progress towards gender equality.

Certainly, there are different expressions of gender inequality throughout the world. For example, countries in Asia may have higher gender inequality than countries in Europe or Australia. Nonetheless, the only reason there is knowledge about gender inequality is the function of the media. The media today, besides informing, has the function to cause a reaction towards the news.

Therefore, in the case of gender inequality, the role of the media is to project a sense of urgency. Nonetheless, there are instances in which the media would not like to project gender disparity. Similar to the negative articles and cartoons present in Jr Thorpe's article. With the issue of negativity towards gender inequality in the media, there is a negative impact on progress. Nonetheless, social media is the most helpful tool that society has at the moment to communicate the problems humanity is facing today, including gender inequality. Although there are negative impacts of social media on gender inequality, the significant impacts are still considered impacts.

Moreover, the opposing impacts on the media portrayal demonstrate the controversy on the basic equal rights of a human, and it shows the amount of power the media has on gender equality. Furthermore, gender inequality is a continuous issue that all countries in the documentation exhibit. The knowledge of gender inequality further stabilizes the argument that the media, like social media, has a great impact on providing awareness and knowledge, and even if there are limits in social media, social media has the power to influence society to make the progress that needs to happen.

Moreover, because different kinds of people are using social media to raise awareness for different issues, social media then increases consciousness of issues that are often left behind. Therefore, making social media a powerful tool to promote gender equality in the modern world. However, there are limits on the impact social media can produce when it comes to gender equality. In the article, "Teaching individuals gender equality and respect," by Dan O' Hare, an educational psychologist, reveals the potential limits on social media by presenting the TIGER program. The potential limits of social media consist of interfering with the values that the TIGER program has. Values like mutual respect.

Surprisingly, the source of the problem is the school and the constant infliction of gender stereotypes and gender roles from a young age. Although Dan O'Hare does not contradict the establishment that social media is the strongest tool to challenge gender inequality, he establishes an alternative tool. The tool is the usage of TIGER. TIGER is an organization that provides workshops to schools and where O'Hare volunteers. He establishes clear and impactful observations that emphasize the importance of the workshops that generate conversation and knowledge about gender. The observations Dan O'Hare (2017) acknowledges are the phrases used by adults that, "Boys will be boys," and "She's a typical little girl." These are negative, yet powerful words that are said in public and in social media that shape the lives of children and their expectations in society.

Moreover, with his observations and data collected from the Girlguiding, the Department for Education, and Samaritans, the findings show that "81 percent of girls aged 11-21 say they have experienced or seen some form of sexism,"(O’Hare 2019) Dan O'Hare provides a strong argument for the importance of the TIGER program. Although this program is introduced in schools and manifests great potential to reverse gender inequality in schools, the potential grows when social media and the TIGER program are combined.

Although there may be inherent conflicts between an innocent yet well-performing program and a ruthless social media, with well-established guidelines, there is a great potential to promote gender equality. Where two different situations appear, and there is a stronger voice for the promotion of gender equality as the one provided in the TIGER program. Therefore, with the combination of a powerful tool like TIGER, and social media, a greater force is created for a tool.

In addition to the limits established by Dan O’Hare, Mirta Lerenço protects the notion that social media is not the best tool, at least not at the moment. Her reasoning begins with her vision of the world as it is. Since the world has several regions and complex policies for the use of media, the person who controls social media differs widely. Therefore, to understand her deeper understanding of the challenges faced by gender inequality in society and the media, she investigated the UNESCO. Mirta Lerenço (2016) explains, through her understanding of UNESCO, that, "This articulation [of knowledge] is necessary to achieve gender equality in and through the media." Therefore, with the current lack of knowledge, social media does not provide the best tool.

However, communication in the media is strong enough to break the barriers standing between gender equality, and the present that consists of gender inequality. With the argument that social media is not the best tool, constructed by Mirta, there is a proposal to increase the chances of allowing social media to impact the progress of gender equality, regardless of the limits. Therefore, the best tool to confront gender inequality in social media, even if it is not operating to its fullest.

The effect social media has on issues dealing with gender inequality are supported by Estelle Loiseau and Keiko Nowacka. Although Social Media has the potential to change the future, there are limits to this powerful tool. For example, Loiseau and Estelle Keiko (2015), “the extent to which women’s online activism has been able to shape and influence policy-making remains patchy and unpredictable.” These limitations are based on a futuristic view rather than the actual progress of now. Although these limitations should be taken into account, they should not determine the outcome of the use of social media and its impact on gender equality.

Estelle Loiseau and Keiko Nowacka establish the importance of technology for the progress of gender equality by establishing the awareness that social media provides to countries where there is high gender disparity. For example, Estelle Loiseau and Keiko (2015) Nowacka mention, "Recent cases in Turkey and India reflect the potential of social media to bridge the gap that often separates grassroots women’s activism from policy-making processes.” The progress that needs to be made in India and Turkey is being made through social media. Therefore, in the article, “Can Social Media Effectively Include Women’s Voices in Decision-Making Processes?” it is established that social media provides a powerful influence to promote gender equality around the world.

Additionally, there is numerical data on the impact social media has on gender-related issues, especially when Twitter is mentioned. “Similarly, in Turkey, the rape and murder of a young woman led to amass Twitter protest through the hashtags #sendeanlat (tell your story) and #ozceganaslan.” ( Estelle Loiseau and Keiko Nowacka, 2015). The millions of people engaged in gender issues through a social network bring to attention to the power of social media. Even though there are thousands of miles of water separating two different continents and countries, the support online breaks this barrier and provides beneficial and realistic support for those that need it.

Moreover, social media, as stated in the article by Estelle and Loiseau (2015) has the potential to have the hashtag, "#BringBackOurGirls" trend with "over 1 million tweets, helping to raise awareness of both national and international actors.” The possibilities are endless when it comes to social media. With the presence of growing modern societies around the world, the way to come together is social media. Therefore, social media creates a fascinating place for people from different backgrounds to socialize and make the progress that is needed for the world to be a better place.

Moreover, the deaths associated with gender inequality of women and transgender individuals are alarming in the global society. For example, the following data provided by the National Action Campaign states that, "An average of three women [murdered] every day.” (“Violence Against Women in the United States: Statistics”). The surprising, yet not surprising fact is that it is 2019, almost 2020, yet there are those starving for a right given, and not a privilege. Nonetheless, organizations like TIGER that shape the lives of children to develop gender equality values. These organizations can be extended into social media and the media in general. Furthermore, social media brings different societies together through social media to defeat gender inequality by using social media as a resource to raise awareness, provide support, and have the courage to fight against it. Although there are limits on these awarenesses, as the world evolves, so does technology. Therefore, social media is important to resolve societal issues on gender equality. Social media raises awareness for gender-related issues that are often left behind, including gender identity and sexuality. Although social media has limits, social media is the modern tool needed to make the progress that needs to happen.

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