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Abstract: Through this case study, the School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) presents its unique experiences and implementation of media and gender issues in its curriculum. The course is modeled after Western construct within Asian context. Media and gender inclusion as a compulsory course in the curriculum is crucial as the graduates of the school will essentially end as media producers as well as media consumers. The course informs students on the importance of being gender sensitive as basically what gender means essentially depends on a society's values, beliefs and preferred ways of organizing collective life. Hence, this course informs students that people are pre-determined by biology but shaped by society and culture while gender in reality is intersectional and structurally based. This article will share the struggle and experiences in pushing the structures and cultural boundaries in order to materialize it.

The leading Feminist thinker, Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal book, *The Second Sex* (1949) stated that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". Drawing from this timeless quote, this article will address the cruciality of mainstreaming gender in media education because gender intersect with other social, political, economy and cultural factors in a society. Gendered inequalities thus intersect with other factors in the society impacting in many aspects of lives.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) argues that "Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity."

In the field of gender and development, intersectionality has emerged as a new framework for understanding oppression and building inclusion—but it has proven a difficult concept to put into practice. Gendered inequalities thus intersect with other aspects of oppression, resulting in unique constellations that include not just gender but race, sexuality, ability, age, social class, caste, appearance, marital status or position as a citizen, indigenous person, refugee or asylum-seeker (Sharpley, M. 2018)

The concept of intersectionality was articulated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who identified a mode of analysis integral to women, gender, sexuality studies.

Within intersectional frameworks, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other aspects of identity are considered mutually constitutive; that is, people experience these multiple aspects of identity simultaneously and the meanings of different aspects of identity are shaped by one another. In other words, notions of gender and the way a

person's gender is interpreted by others are always impacted by notions of race and the way that person's race is interpreted. Crenshaw (1989) Hence, according to Crenshaw (1989). The notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of an experience of race. In addition to race, gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability.

Intersectionality essentially recognizes how multiple systems of oppression, including racism, patriarchy, capitalism, interact to disseminate disadvantage to and institutionally stratify different groups. The theory accounts for how systems of oppression reinforce each other, and how their power must be understood not as individually constituted but rather as co-created in concert with each other. It emphasis on interlocking systems of structural power and domination. (Barbara J. Risman, Carissa M. Froyum, William J. Scarborough, 2018)

Essentially, this article presents how intersectionality as a concept is crucial to be considered in Media Education as it intertwined with interlocking systems of structural power and domination which is patriarchy and oppression of women through cultural mindset. These Western research and constructs are applied in the Media and Gender course syllabus but using Asian context as "a new paradigm" based on Asian experience generally and Malaysian specifically. Instead of rejecting Western concepts and models, the course modeled after global (Western) communications constructs as the premise to this course while simultaneously and concurrently developing of a new Asian construct.

Gender and Media Studies

Buonanno (2014:6) argued that "Gender and media studies have witnessed a resounding revival in recent years, as is testified by the wide array of published monographs, articles, themed issues of international journals and conferences that bring into focus the diverse features of the relationship between gender and the media of communication. Gender and media still matters and still calls for dedicated attention and commitment from scholars,"

The relationship between the two components of the dyad has perhaps never before been so challenging and complicated – indeed 'tricky', to quote Karen Ross (2010: viii); this becomes apparent in the contemporary scenario, characterised by dramatic change in the media landscape and by redefinition of boundaries, as well as pluralization, of gender identities. (Buonanno, 2014).

She further stated that “ We live as never before in a media-supersaturated world, owing to the growing proliferation and interconnection of technologies and cultural forms of communication. It creates the conditions of an expanded media environment in which the power of the media, essentially the symbolic power of defining and constructing reality, “of imposing the vision of legitimate divisions” (Bourdieu, 1989:22) today finds extensive scope and unprecedented wide variety of sites of production”. (cited in Buonanno, 2014)

Buonanno (2014) reiterated further that we are concerned precisely with this power when we interrogate and investigate the gendered and gendering dimensions of the media – as discourses, institutions, technologies and so on – in order to grasp and understand the role they play, always at the intersection with other social and cultural factors, in influencing processes of gender identity formation and development.

And since both the notion and the lived experience of gender identity are today in a state of flux, and the male/female dichotomy (whether predicated upon traditional essentialist positions or on theories of the social construction of male/female differences) has been transcended by a broader spectrum of gender identities, it becomes evident that the intellectual challenge of doing gender and media scholarship is more stimulating, demanding and ‘tricky’ than ever. This challenge calls into play the theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and interpretative strategies that we embrace as scholars and researchers in undertaking such an intellectual endeavour: in other words how we do gender and media studies, Buonanno affirmed.

In essence, what we research/study, why we research/study and how we research/study on gender in the media, matters.

The situation is becoming more demanding and challenging in this Posthumanism era whereby Artificial Intelligence (AI) dominates the landscape and changes many ways of understanding gender issues. It will become more complex especially when humanism is being challenged by the dynamic advancement of technology. Research and media studies on gender will be more demanding in terms of the complexity of the messages as we know that media is a communication tool – messages are the power, not the technology. The issues of humanness versus AI will mainly be the most fundamental yet crucial issue that is the ability to change one’s mindset must come from human’s intelligence because AI is not ready and not able to analyze, question, evaluate and critique the structures.

Gender and the Malaysian Landscape

Malaysia’s Global Gender Gap Index of 2018 shows that while Malaysian women fair quite well in education and health, the gaps between women and men in the area of economic and political empowerment are noticeably wide. Malaysia ranked 104 out of 144 countries

in closing the gap for economic participation and opportunity and 134 for political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2018). Malaysia's score for political empowerment shows a very high imparity, at 0.061 (where 1 indicates the highest parity and 0 lowest parity).

In Malaysia, female students are currently over-represented in most public universities and nowadays females have outperformed male students in the examination at school level which then qualifies them for university entrance. Female students consist of 64% of total enrolment in universities in Malaysia. According to the report, women enrolment in primary and tertiary level are higher than men (Female 48.3%, Male 38.2% for tertiary level) The 2018 Global Gender Gap Index reported that Malaysia scored 54.7% (and ranked at 104) for the labor force participation rate, which indicates relatively high imparity.

Hence, it is important to understand why as Malaysian women over-achieve in education, their labor force participation rate and economic empowerment continues to show wide gaps compared to men.

While women globally have made important inroads into political office across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7 per cent is still far from parity.

In Malaysia, percentage of elected Parliamentarians by State and Gender in 2018 is still dismally low. Malaysian 14th GE saw an unprecedented representation of female elected politicians. However, the overall percentage is still low with only 10.9% of Parliamentary candidates and 10.8% of State Assembly candidates being women, the desired minimum of 30% women representation in government remained unattainable. In terms of government's gender structure, women make up 16.4% of the frontbench, where 17.8% are represented in ministership and 14.8% in deputy ministership. Gender inequality in salaries and wages remains an unsolved issues in Malaysia. The mid-skill occupations and low-skilled occupations, in particular, sustained huge gender wage gaps, where men are paid at least 20% higher than women on average (Penang Monthly, May 2019)

Malaysian women have been given little consideration where autonomy, basic rights and decision-making powers are concerned, even though Malaysia gained its independence 62 years ago. Whether it is in the political, economy, social or cultural realm, their voices have not been adequately and promptly recognised.

This situation can also be understood through the patriarchal nature of the Malaysian society. Over the years, the patriarchal system in Malaysia has become very prevalent and

customary despite the fact that Malaysian women have participated and contributed extensively towards the social and economic development of the country.

According to Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (2001), the constitution guarantees gender equality particularly from the perspective of employment in the private sector, pregnancy and gender discrimination. However, the equal opportunity and rights given to women in making decision or as policy makers at the work place are still imbalanced.

Therefore, the Malaysian Cabinet approved a policy that set a target of 30% of women representation in decision making positions across all Malaysian public listed companies by 2016. However, according to the 2018 Department of Statistics Malaysia, women participated 22.2% as legislators, seniors official and managers.

The distinct roles and behaviours determined by a culture may give rise to gender inequalities such as the differences between men and women that systematically favour one group.

Acceptable 'gender roles' are often translated into policies and activities. Despite the fact that many governments including Malaysian have ratified gender instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) , gender inequality persists blatantly and widely.

Gender stereotypes are products of cultures. The idea of cultural difference in gender roles has been supported by numerous studies (Basow, 1984; Chia, Moore, Lam, Chuang, & Cheng, 1994; Lara-Cantu & Navarro-Arias, 1987; Novakovic & Kidd, 1988; Williams, Satterwhite, & Best, 1999).

Representations in the media of people, events and relationships are about power-relations. Messages emerge from very complex systems of production. Hence, how gender is (re)produced in the media can't be understood in isolations as it is about power-relations.

Media's treatment on gender issues has always been a vital concern of many, especially strong advocates of human rights principles who view detrimental treatment of women as one of the major impediments in achieving gender equality. Such gendered societal structure is extended naturally into other socio-political structures including the media.

Women are not only disadvantaged through conditional career mobility within the management structure of the media. As a group, their cause for the advancement of their status through the use of media content is also being marginalized. The media is more interested in women as consumers. Women are stereotyped and used to market, sell and

consumed products. Stereotypical images of women in the media are enhanced by the extended commercialization.

Media and Gender

Media does not exist in a vacuum and is not an autonomous institution – the end products are the reflection of the social practices in the media production process. Media operates within a social context where social forces and power relations can impinge upon the way issues and events are covered. Put another way, reality is socially constructed in a manner so that things and people are regarded via the media as “normal” and “natural”.(Wood, J. T. (2001)

As gender is culturally and socially constructed over times, it is then through these cultural process and social interactions especially through media that woman’s positions in the society should be appropriately defined and positioned. As Van Zoonen (1991) argued, media played a significant role in the ongoing social construction of gender as media are social institutions located within the overall social structure, Therefore, media should play its role as a mechanism for social control, equally and democratically. This is also in accordance with notion of ideological site whereby media are among the central sites in which struggle over meaning takes place.

Therefore, an analysis of media content is very crucial due to the media’s role as a powerful source of meaning about the social world. However, media content does not equate with social reality as media content only ‘represents’ or ‘re-presents’ the realities in the real social ,economic and political world. Whose version of realities is often questioned by media scholars. The critical media studies continue to ask questions such as:

what does media content tell us about unequal power relationships?

what discourses and/or ideologies are employed in order to tell stories about the social world?

what aspects do they highlight?

what aspects do they ignore?;

how do particular forms of media content shape public opinion and public policy?; and how and why do particular forms of media representation about class, gender or ethnicity change over time? (Deverux, E. 2003).

Scholars who study media discovered that most people rely on media to craft their opinions, identities and lives (Calvert, 1999; Croteau & Hoynes, 1999). Wood (2005) further asserts that media potentially hamper our understandings of ourselves as women and men in three ways.

Firstly, media perpetuates unrealistic ideals of women and men.

Secondly, media pathologizes the bodies of women and men and especially, prompting us to consider normal physical qualities and functions as abnormal and requiring corrective measures.

Thirdly, media contributes significantly to normalizing violence against women, making it possible for men to believe they are entitled to abuse women or force them to engage in sex, and making it possible for women to consider it as acceptable.

Media content play a hugely significant role in shaping our perceptions of what constitutes ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. According to Lemish (2004), 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 an arena within which 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. Lemish reiterated that worldwide studies on the representation of women, based on a variety of methodologies (both content analyses and semiotics) and of media, suggest similar frameworks of gender discriminations.

Women are mostly relegated to the private sphere, emotional worlds, sexual worlds and presented mostly in subordination to men. This framing of women according to Lemish was defined by Tuchman (1978) as ‘symbolic annihilation’ achieved through processes of condemnation, trivialization, and the absence of women from the media.

As in many Asian countries where women are committed to family responsibilities prescribed by their gender roles (Abdullah, Noor and Wok, 2008), Malaysian society and culture traditionally have upheld a male-centered construct and very masculine in nature. Despite the country’s economic growth and progress, Malaysia is still considered as a patriarchal society (Ng, Loy, Gudmunson & Cheong, 2009). The patriarchal system emboldens the still existing prejudice toward women despite Malaysian women’s remarkable progress at so many levels of life that parallels the nation’s tremendous development.

Media Representation

Feminism today is widely recognized as the driving force for securing and defending equal rights and opportunities for women and raising awareness that issues, exist, which need to be addressed. High on their agenda is the matter of representation. This is not a recent concern; in fact representation has always been a key battleground for feminism (Van Zoonen, (1991).

As far back as the 1860s according to Van Zoonen (1991), feminists in Britain and America campaigned relentlessly about the treatment of women in newspapers and magazines. At

the time, many women were beginning to seek increasing rights socially, educationally, politically and economically, yet the newspapers and magazines chose to mock these women or even ignore them completely. A century later in the 1960s, and the 'second wave' of the women's movement brought about a flurry of interest by feminist scholars and activists into the way in which all forms of media portrayed women.

According to Carter and Steiner (2004) "The concern was that the sexist messages of these media forms socialized people, especially children, into thinking that dichotomized and hierarchical sex-role stereotypes were 'natural' and 'normal'.

The 1960s through to the 1980s is an era where systematic research into media images of women burgeoned (Carter and Steiner 2004). In reviewing many of these studies from all over the world, there were striking similarities.

"Women were underrepresented in both media production and content, and the women that did appear in media content were mostly young and pretty, defined in relation to another man, usually their husband, son, father or boss, and characteristically portrayed as passive, dependent, indecisive or submissive" (cited in Van Zoonen, 1991)

Research Conducted

My latest research on media and gender (2017) looked at editorial content and main topics covered by six popular Malaysian men and women's magazines to bring into focus the relationship between media and gender in Malaysia.

A qualitative approach was applied and mapping the overall format helped find the discourse that are the main focus of the magazines.

Textual analysis of 497 articles gave a mental picture on discourses in Malaysian women and men magazines in relation to the relationship between media and gender in Malaysia.

497 articles were successfully collected from 18 magazine issues and there were seven categories as that were mainly featured: Fashion & Beauty; Personality; Health, Fitness & Diet; Recipes & Home; Gadgets & Auto; Family and; Money & Career.

These seven categories were identified because they were the topics found most frequently featured in the magazines.

The three top categories in terms of frequency in these magazines were Fashion & Beauty, Personality and Health, Fitness & Diet. The numbers collected confirmed that these magazines concentrated on both men and women's physical attributes but for different reasons – women to be attractive to attract a partner or keep a partner and men to be

physically fit and of stature to come across as masculine and strong. This study demonstrates that the conservative and the prevailing traditional perception of women's role in society is still at large within the society in general and media industry in particular. In these articles, except those pertaining to health and style, little or none of women's or men's issues such as gender equality surfaced in the articles of these magazines. In fact, the articles are kept lighthearted, cheerful, photograph-driven, easy to digest and positive..

We are in the 21st Century and we are still reading and receiving the same messages from the previous centuries. The question is WHY?

Addressing Inequalities

The societal, economic and political forces are always influencing the content of the media, generally. The media content on the other hand, provides messages about norms, culture and ideologies, specifically.

Gender is an ideology and gender ideology also refers to societal beliefs that legitimate gender inequality.

Research conducted on the issues of gender in the Malaysian media has shown that women are primarily positioned in traditional gender identity and roles. Traditional gender conformity and gender reinforcement are problematic messages regarding gender exist due to the known forces i.e the mindset of being conformist to the PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM.

Patriarchy is crucial to be studied because of its negative impact on women and resulted in stereotyping women. The patriarchal system hinders women from reaching their potential. Patriarchy refers to an ideology that raise up men to positions of superior and to recognize their importance in comparison to women. This in turn, disregard women's ability, potential, qualifications, skills and other aspects of women's lives.

Malaysian society and culture traditionally have upheld a male-centered construct and very masculine in nature. The patriarchal system is still largely at work and prejudice still exists for women.

Case Study: Identification of the Need for a Course in Media and Gender

Course Title: YWP315 – MEDIA AND GENDER : THE STRUGGLE

The main objective : Students and Graduates from the School of Communication USM become the AGENT OF CHANGE .

How This Will Be Achieved: Educating and Exposing them to what matters in Media and Gender through Gender Lens by introducing them to a specific course on Media and Gender

as a Core Course. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES. Critical frame of reference to the students. Focus on the IDEOLOGICAL Factors.

To reinstate, reiterate and restate Buonanno (2014:22); “This challenge calls into play the theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and interpretative strategies that we embrace as scholars and researchers in undertaking such an intellectual endeavour : in other words how we do gender and media studies”. In essence, what we research/study, why we research/study and how we research/study on gender in the media, matters.

What To Offer : Global Communication and Asian Context

Issues in the media relating to gender such as the construction of identities, societal perceptions, constructions and deconstructions of gender, important gender concepts and media representations on gender.

Theories, Approaches and Methodologies

Media Medium : Newspapers, Magazines, Film, Television, Social Media.

Gender and Culture

Approach to gender : “Nature” or “Nurture”

Gender, Social Construction and Imbalances

Important concepts : Identity, Patriarchy, Sexualities, Capitalism, Consumerism, Masculinity, Femininity

Women Movement – Feminism and Social Transformation

Women Movement in Malaysia

Researching Media and Gender

How to : Theory, Approach and Methodology

Feminism, Media Studies and Gender

Queer Theory

Content Analyses

Semiotics

Narrative and Textual Analyses

Gender Representation : Newspaper, Magazine, Film, Television, Audiences, Advertisement.

Religion and gender perspective is not a part of the topic because it is discussed briefly under Gender and Culture and Social Construction. Religion is a lengthy and detailed and focused topic which requires experts inputs. And I am not that expert.

The Structures and Cultural Challenges

Faculty members (Female & Male) who subscribed to the patriarchal mindset.

Faculty members who are ignorant about Gender Issues (What Gender Issues???).

Faculty members who are with preconceived ideas that Gender is about Male bashing.

Faculty members who believe that Gender is a non-issues.

Faculty members who believe in OTHER important courses because Gender is not a crucial topic to become a course.

Discussion and Conclusions: Working Within and Against The Structures

Essentially, the struggle and experiences in pushing the structures and cultural boundaries in order to materialize Media and Gender as a core course took place for about six years of struggling within and against the structures.

I argued elsewhere (Azman, 2019, 2018; 2017) that education is one of the apparatus to inculcate gender-sensitive culture in the society. The achievement of a truly democratic society requires gender equality to be a mainstream agenda. The education system can help to provide images that reflect and reinforce the pragmatic gender roles instead of perpetuating socially constructed gender roles. Societal mindsets can only be shifted through education and media can help in changing the public attitude. And that, must begin at home (informal socialization) and formal education institutions (school, universities).

The main issue to be addressed is on how to get a foot in a conventional structure of challenging deeply patriarchal structures, and negotiating it. In the present cabinet line up, we are still witnessing more male hands managing the nation. Where are the females?

The current Malaysian political culture consists of 35 Ministers and only 3 are female. There are 34 Deputy Ministers and only 6 are female. Concentration of power in the male hands has been the norm in Malaysia.

Hence, consciousness-raising is very crucial as structures need to be dismantled, cultural norms and mindset must be reexamined, critique, reevaluate and rethink.

Media scholars and researchers must unpack the meaning of gender in the education system in order to humanizing the research, society and values. Certain values must be constant as human scholars. The core values such as representation of values, justice,

equality and ethics must be featured in different modes –(i) traditional media (ii) social media – free for all

In essence, structurally-reinforced ideological forms of oppression must be addressed in order to create a just world. This is in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The Goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 SDGs, which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests

Goal 5 of the SDGs is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

While the world is supposed to have achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence everywhere. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

Mainstreaming gender in media education is a part of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) which was launched in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, is a global

strategy used to promote gender equality and equity. It refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming in Malaysia was established as a global strategy for the promotion of gender equality, as indicated in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, 1995. Competition against man is not the main reason used to propose for the introduction of GM. More likely, GM is form of approach to ensure that women receive the same benefits as the men once women's population reaches half of the world's total population.

It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (Nur Syakiran Akmal Ismail, and Ummu Atiyah Ahmad Zakuan (2014).

In essence, mainstreaming gender in today's media education is highly relevant and long overdue.

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