

MEDIA AND ITS ROLE IN THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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Abstract

The power of media all around the world is at a high importance level because it is one of the main column of society (the fourth power) which has an influence in the creation and in changing of convictions, perceptions and also in the development of society in general. The role played by the media in treatment of social problems, with a focus in gender issues it is vital for enforcement of women position in our society. But the reality of our society shows a lack of gender equality. While being influenced by politics, media is focused on a wide massive programs that include heated political debates, where the men are the dominating actors too. It has started a new age of relationship and influence between media and politics, as media is influenced by politics in the same way the politics is being influenced by the media. Albanian media presents a surface image of woman. They are not immune from prejudices of society in general, including even gender prejudices. It paints them as uninterested in political issues and consequently they will be considered unable to participate in leading processes as men do. What it remains is that the main challenge is the change of mentality, created centuries ago in gender differences influenced also by tradition or even by the culture. It is media that should transmit in the public the message that participation of women in the political life it is an essential part of democracy, also it has to play a positive role in improvement of woman image, in the change of gender stereotypes and to use its influence and contribution in achieving gender equality.

Keyword: gender -political participation-media-communication-lack of gender equality-prejudice to the image of women in politics-media-political.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations are actually a very important aspect of daily duties of a government, political parties and also of different organizations in a country. But, in electoral campaigns public relation constitute the moving engine and structuring of communication strategies which are primary for a politician in a campaign .What it happens in this transmitting "war" is that all the efforts for being as much positive as possible, the media plays the main role in creation of a politician portrait which in most cases is different from what in reality he or she is, so it is what the politician wants to be and the figure the voters prefer, sometimes a false image and disappointing. It is a really stencil, but the media role during an electoral campaign is at a high importance.The independence of edition ,integrity and professionalism constitute the correct basic coverage of elections.The lack of journalism independence or responsibility, combined with the homogeny composition of media may prejudge the results of elections. As result it is needed a different organ of media which represent different interests and which are supported by different structures. But this creates competition, becoming more channels and rising of competition in the electronic market has created a considerable concern.

MEDIA DURING AN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

The political role of modern media and the influence they have in public opinion has become a subject which has been given different colors. For different reasons the role of television has been the one who has created the most of debates. The TV has the largest cover and for this reason it is believed to have the biggest influence. Mass media, especially the TV has played a main role in highlighting the readership characteristics. It has no doubt that in fact the TV encourages the personalization of politics by bringing the voice and the face of politicians in the homes of citizens in a regular manner. Referring the book of Altheide & Snow, (**Altheide & Snow, 1979: 106**) among the dominating schemes by which the mass media profiles the political reality the one of personalization profile is the most visible. The easiest explanation of this is the fact that the media has limited opportunities of transmitting a complete view and complete world of politics so that they give priorities to those political aspects which may be easily transmitted in good media materials which means, those products which are enough spectacular for drawing a large number of audience (**Butler & Ranney, 1992: 42**). This kind of behavior has done that the mass media report the politics as a game or as it's often presented as a horse race. "In the journalism game the focus in fact is concentrated only on some individuals, in politicians more than the wide interests that they represent and more than wide political forces that give forms to their political actions" (**Patterson, 2000: 106**).

The parties or the candidates which participate electoral races consider TV as the most preferable instrument for doing campaign. They organize the campaign in such manner that they could be visible on TV as much as they can. So they take the opportunities to take photos, walk, give press conferences to organizing electoral meetings. The politicians use more and more sound voices which are appropriate for evening news editions and also they dedicate more and more time to the financial sources analyses for audition, marketing techniques, the presence and TV training. These two developments – adding the number of channels and rising the level of professionalism by which the parties and candidates organize and control their campaigns – are changing in now days the manner of covering of campaigns in TV.

MEDIA AND POLITICIANS

In modern democracy leading positions of politics can't be explained without referring their communication style and their political strategies. At one of their article Mazzoleni and Schulz told that on the main aspects of doing politics in media is that the political actors have shown that they are capable of "adjusting their behavior according to the requests of media" which means that "they perform a situation in a such a manner that they earn the attention of media, or if they decide to happen an event they do it in a manner that it meets the requirements referring the time, place, the way how the message is transmitted and performed." (**Gianpietro & Schulz, 1999: 247–61**). It seems that the politician have found the right instrument for their political figure and it seems that media, does nothing else but perfects their figure. The creation of media brought creation of opportunities that politicians actually find a good media space for "promoting" themselves. In campaigns time this turns in a necessity. Media has everything that they need, it has the proper instruments to make them liked from the public and to transmit their ideas. (**McLuhan, 2004: 184**).

Among the instruments that may favorize and lead a political leader to success no surely the mass media will come as an important factor which may be compared from the importance with a party or a political movement. Really exists a common opinion that while the parties may lose their power for gathering and keeping the support of public, the TV has done that the process of mobilisation of the voters by giving the political leaders a direct connection with the voters or their followers. In this manner modern leaders have been adjusted to political area and has started to direct their message and the style of this message to be suitable with the TV format. With TV has arrived time for a kind leadership which with other words may be called "publicised" (**Fuga, 2004: 141**).

The first goal of a political leader is to form and sell his image by Television. In a special way the television is the best ally for a potential leader while the TV creates the spaces that a political actor be seen and heard by a large number of citizens even they are not present. These images curated by media which are shown to the voters, become in fact powerful symbols which "identify or determine a candidate".

THE ROLE OF MEDIA

Also in Albania despite the improvements done, there are still some concerns referring women presentation in media and their role, especially the space time that it is dedicated in media. Media plays an important role in every society and in this direction Albania can't be exception. After 1990 media (press and TV) it earned the freedom and as a result the independence. Finally it could practice its main function; informing the public.

But, after 25 of years free press the question arises: Does the media play its role as a space where the society interchanges the thoughts or the attitudes for the different problems that concern it?

Media and press in democracy play an important role in because they have a wide impact at the public opinion as the media is the mirror of the government problems and of the political system. The gender must be treated as result of communication and not as a cause of it because the communication creates the gender and then this creates the communication, even though the media knows and is aware of prejudices for the portrait of woman.

As we all know the daily press has the same format. They have determined their category with the hope that they will transmit wider the reality. But, difficult achieving it. The politics no doubt overpowers even is present when it is supposed the subject is social or culture. Unfortunately, even it is not said, the fact that you are in the media or not, tells if you are important or not. What is the worst is that, it may convince the audience that just the things that are heard are the things that are worthy to discuss. Media is free to give the desired colors which it desire different messages of politics or political institutions. While the message is transmitted by media, it (media) uses this power for its interests. As a result the politician should learn media's game and adjust it. The power that media has at converting a political news or event, the politician itself creates an illusion for audience, people about politics. Often the politicians by television are seen as untouchable or powerful, but this feeling is far away from reality. The speech as the main element of communication is the main instrument of propaganda manipulation of people. By changing the way of speaking, he starts to speak fast and with reduced terms in order to include every issue of his agenda and while concentrated at the "look"¹ he loses the understanding of audience. In this way the man are presented well as a gender stereotype in public posts but rarely as parents or in other family issues.

Media necessarily should avoid the negative presentation of women by presenting more and more the determination and her capacity for being active in the political life. She also can and should stress the importance of women role in the social-economical life during the development stages process. Media attention towards gender issues actually remains weak. We think that this comes from the lack of integration of gender issues and also from the lack of gender issues experts in the media institution. Albanian media continues to remain politicized and commercial. Being influenced by politics, media is focused in a wide range of programs which include hard political debates, where the men are the dominant actors. Rarely you may watch women on TV programs, where are given opinions about politics, economy or other important international events. Also during the electoral campaigns, politician women find it difficult to take the needed space in the media in order to present their program and objectives to the public and electorate.

In common talks is noticed a wonder of people by asking what influence have the media, especially the TV ones, referring the politicians or politics. Often people could notice the politicization of media and while this phenomenon has begun to be seen as a normality, those Televisions that present themselves as independent are viewed with suspicion. So there started to be noticed a relationship and influence between media and politics. As media is influenced by politics in the same way the politics is influenced by media. Such analyse has started to be taken by different analysts, but still are not so clear about this phenomenon. So much is left aside this aspect as would be seem strange if it is said as the best specialists of communication has said that it is media and firstly the TV who forms the politics in form and content deeply. In a few words it is has importance for the watchers of TV, public and electoral, surely also for analysts and researchers, to be clear for the influence that politics have on information that media transmits especially TV media, but in inverse action for the level of influence that cameras have over the TV message and the form that it takes. (**Fuga 2007**). So it is clear that media has big influence in transmission of political messages. Today's electronic media has a massive function, while the massive meetings are old school and physical meetings of politicians with people too, we may surely say that the politician is dependent on TV screen. As a result he or she must improve the speaking manner and behaviour on TV during the statements or conversations he or she holds. In short we may say that he should learn to be a good actor in order to be liked and reliable from the public which in this case is viewer.

Zhak Burdie has arrived in an interesting conclusion where he is expressed that TV doesn't reflect a political event but it produces it. This is an innovation in democratic life in the circumstances of communication society.²

¹ Look - external appearance, including hair model to the brightness of the shoe.

² Ibid

It is clear that this is a very clear conclusion and may say that this certifies the political reality of now days. The contribution that media plays in promoting awareness of woman's problems is no doubt important. Through the media could be transmitted in public the message that the involvement of woman in political life is an essential part of democracy. But the media presents a surface image of the woman. It presents them as not interested in political issues and consequently will be considered incapable of taking leading processes as men do. Media often propagates gender stereotypes who presents the women in their traditional role and less visible than men especially at the power position.

THE MEDIA PORTRAYAL FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS

The acceptance, promoting and practicing gender equality in the media is a necessity for every democratic society, as it affects the growth of women involvement in all life areas, especially at the decision making institutions. Media should keep distance from the gender language ,the false presentation and created stereotypes on individual roles in general and that of woman in special ,as in family as in society. Media isn't immunized from the prejudices of society in general, including the gender prejudices .It suffers today from a deficient culture referring gender equality. Written media, visual media and those social ones as Twitter, FaceBook etc, reinforce the traditional meaning of male, female and gender roles. Media is a power, a power de facto through the power that it has, the mission it has .Its mission it isn't simply the mechanical presentation of events that follow the development of society, bringing the change, the promotion of values and concepts for gender equality, if not, we front with politician women who have the power or are looking for it and return to male .Beyond the nature appeared before entering in politics. In some public debates transmitted in media it is noticed an inclusion of women which took place along with male candidates, and the media presented the debates without gender differences. Although, there is still an approach that demonstrates that media provide a weaker coverage of female candidates than male candidates, and in general the media carries gender stereotypes. So, when the women candidates are profiled, media especially the local ones, are often focused on private issues or physical characteristics of woman (if they are attractive) and not in issues that are important for the campaign. It has a kind of disregard of media when the issues come at the women rights and its inclusion in politics. This is because most of media editors are male and they ignore in general such treatments, "forgetting" that women take 50% of population, most of journalists are women and the women rights are the human rights. The vocabulary of journalist when they speak about women is often ugly, and woman in the media is interesting when it is seen as victim. A little space is given the inclusion of woman in politics and the stimulation of raising the number of girls and women involved actively in it. Unused spaces remained in media for politician women are little. In most cases you may see the same faces shown on screens who has taken before the approval from their parties to make statements. Others rest in the shade,waiting for the next to be identified by their parties leaders and latter to have much more access in the media, because the media itself it isn't likely to offer space to them, look for them and promote for the values they have and their contribution they really bring in politics.

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