

**THE GENDER DIVIDES OF THE MAURITIAN SOCIETY:
RE-APPROPRIATING THE EMPOWERMENT
AND CITIZENSHIP DISCOURSE**

Edited by
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**THE GENDER DIVIDES OF THE MAURITIAN SOCIETY:
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This book brings together a group of scholars and practitioners working in different disciplines to interrogate the concepts of empowerment, citizenship and gender justice from conceptual, contextual and strategic angles within diverse arenas. This interdisciplinary study fills in an important knowledge gap since it brings an important feminist analysis on current debates on development, empowerment and citizenship in Mauritius.

"Gender equality and women's empowerment and the full realisation of human rights for women and girls will have a transformative and multiplier effect on sustainable development and is a driver of economic growth in small island developing state like Mauritius (UN, 2016). Women can be powerful agents of change." This quote is the essence of this important contribution to gender equality, not only for Mauritius but also for the African continent. The publication contains important social research outputs from Mauritius on the three main themes covered, namely women's engagement and power relations; power relations in the private sphere; and women's agency and livelihood.

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CHAPTER TWO

EDITORSHIP, AGENCY AND CONTENT THROUGH THE GENDER LENS: AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER BALANCE IN THE NEWS INDUSTRY AND ITS OUTPUT IN MAURITIUS

Christina Chan-Meetoo

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The mass media are a key institutional player in the public sphere. Whether they merely act as a conduit for information or actively seek to shape public opinion, it is undeniable that they hold a very significant place in our lives and, thus, need to be the subject of close scrutiny. In this highly mediated world marked by the omnipresence of the mass media including television, written press, billboards, radio and online media, there is a limited number of studies focussing on the content, which is churned out by these various channels, their reception by the masses and the processes at work in the industry around.

Such scrutiny has taken a new turn with the incorporation of feminist and gender studies since the second wave feminism of the 1970's. The examination of the media's symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1998) to define and construct our social reality includes inevitably a focus on the gendered dimensions of those media institutions from their inherent structures to their massively symbolic content. Deconstructing media processes in news production from a gender viewpoint allows us to investigate their potential impact on identity formation and citizenship.

"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." (Buonanno, 2014, p.6).

These investigations are not merely meant to point an accusatory finger at the media. **The reason why such interrogations are crucial is that the media themselves can and should be encouraged to act as change agents.** As part of a social system, it may be difficult for them to realise the impact of their own reporting on society, particularly as the issues become deeply embedded and hidden behind apparently progressive patterns. The dominant patriarchal model is increasingly taking the face of a more insidious or benevolent type (Hooks, 2002) especially as freedoms become equated with consumer choice and abundance (Klein, 1999), rather than freedom from all fetters, be they physical or symbolic domination.

This chapter aims at providing an in-depth analysis of the media in Mauritius by examining the above issues and providing empirical evidence in order to support lobbying efforts towards media industries for greater gender equality. In the following sections of this chapter, we will first provide a cursory look at the relevant literature, which provides the background for the study, introduce the various methodological approaches, which have been used, and finally examine the findings.

2.2 THE MEDIA, GENDER AND DEMOCRACY NEXUS

As Fourth Estate, the mass media are deemed to play a central role in societies that aspire to operate according to the tenets of democracy. Though there has yet never been any perfect democracy, the various assessments of countries in the world consider that the presence of free mass media is an important factor, for example, in many recognised indices such as those published by Freedom House, the EIU Democracy Index, Reporters Without Borders, Transparency International, Afrobarometer and the Global Integrity Report. The rationale is that informed public debate is necessary for a democratic state and that informed public debate is made possible thanks, in large part, to free mass media.

In addition to the demand for free media in democracies, there are also increasing demands to make such media more accountable to the different publics they serve. It is no longer sufficient to be content with the existence of media, which can operate freely in the sense of being free from State control and censorship as in the capitalist democracy. This is so because the mass media have the power to tell a society's stories and thereby influence thinking, beliefs and behaviours. Following in the footsteps of the Marxist and the Frankfurt schools of thought, Enzensberger (1974) and other scholars have argued that the mainstream media as a 'mind industry' aims to 'sell the existing order'. The ultimate objective would be to blind the masses through false consciousness, preserve the status quo in order to maintain the hegemonic social order and, thus, reinforce the ideological basis of the capitalist system (Fuchs, 2012) within the public sphere (Habermas, 1984). This is done, according to Debord (1967), through what he calls "the society of the spectacle" and is founded on the consumption of symbolic content: images, ideas and commodities.

Modern phenomena such as concentration of media ownership (Bagdikian, 2004) and reduction in media staff size have also not helped. As mainstream media struggles against revenue losses due to audience fragmentation facilitated by new media platforms and focus on trying to bring back the higher profit levels they historically enjoyed, the temptation to dumb down becomes stronger. Easy to replicate recipes in reporting and entertainment, media becomes the norm to woo

¹The three other Estates are the three branches of government, namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The Fourth Estate refers to the role of the press as a watchdog over the first three Estates to ensure that they adequately fulfil their roles without abuse in order for democracy to function properly.

ever-elusive audiences, and so does the import of simplistic global cultural codes in order to appeal to largest possible audiences.

Such alarming trends further reduce the chance of seeing increased and real diversity of voices and opinions in mainstream media. The emphasis is here on **real** diversity in opposition to window-dressing diversity that will be geared towards number crunching rather than content quality such that the end result remains essentially biased towards dominant narratives. For instance, women news anchors have long been used as "faire-valoir" on international news channels. According to Engstrom and Ferri (2000, p.631), "female anchors rated the overemphasis placed by others on their appearance as being a major challenge in doing their job [...], a major hindrance to their career development". They were to be quickly discarded when the signs of age creep in whilst the male anchors remain firmly anchored in their seats (Price, 2005). The same can be said of popular actresses whose careers as protagonists are shorter on average when compared with those of their male counterparts (Wilson, 2015). Feminist media theorists have also argued that news are constructed like fictional genres, which systematically exclude women's voices from the popular discourse (Thornham, 2007), which is in contradiction to Made's (2000, p.29) statement that "the media are a key institutional player in holding governments and other institutions accountable for adhering to the democratic ideals of transparency, accountability and 'good governance', which must include equality for women and men."

Unfortunately, in the society of spectacle, the woman, in particular, her body, plays a key role as an object to be looked at (Berger, 1972). The notion of beauty may seem to be a natural part of the deal but it is not when it turns into a tyranny. Greer (2007, p.27) rightly stated that: "Every woman knows that, regardless of her other achievements, she is a failure if she is not beautiful." Not only are women still twice as likely to feature in ads for domestic products (Batsch et al., 2000), the advertising world has also cunningly co-opted the feminist discourse on liberation to sell products to women themselves, touting cosmetics as the ultimate weapon for women's empowerment.

Undoubtedly, if the media are to consider and depict men and women as equal partners in the multi-layered world we inhabit, then they must challenge gender-based discriminations and stereotyping in order to continue to influence public attitudes on human rights issues. "To date, the media have positively influenced public attitudes on many issues of human rights, but failed to challenge gender-based discrimination in societies across the world" (Made, 2000, p.29).

Okello-Orlale further argues that:

"(...) it is widely accepted that mass media have the capacity to bring education, essential skills, social unity and a desire for change. The media is seen as a powerful tool and an agent for change, which can play a great role in influencing the direction of development. For women's development to take place, the role of the media therefore is critical." (Okello-Orlale, 2006, p.48).

Mitigated Progress

Despite some progress in the representation of gender categories since the inception of media monitoring studies, such as those conducted by Gender Links under the aegis of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the media are still responsible for either significant invisibility of women with respect to serious news topics (what Gaye Tuchman has termed 'symbolic annihilation'), systematic misrepresentation (e.g. as secondary citizens) or a plethora of stereotypical images (e.g. the virtuous wife or the sinful lover).

Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersect (LGBTI) community suffer similar setbacks and even men, albeit on a smaller scale, are subjected to media pressure as masculinity too is being redefined to accommodate the needs of consumerism (Gauntlett, 2002) such that men also experience dissatisfaction with their selves due to the tyranny of beauty (Walter, 1999).

In the second and third worlds, these issues become even more problematic when they intersect with the post-colonial and neo-colonial symbolical and cultural legacies. The African continent is one of the most impacted as its citizens suffer from continuous physical and cultural discriminations, which are deeply and insidiously embedded in the global as well as in their very own psyche.

Okello-Orlale (2006, p.52) notes that:

"the majority of people around the world are not equal members and participants of this global village, neither as consumers or producers. Notwithstanding the increasing concentration of the media in the hands of a few people in Africa, mainly private investors with a global reach, has brought with it the export of cultural models and their codes, perceptions and prejudices, including gender, cultural and ethnic stereotypes."

Mauritius is no exception. Women's pages and magazines provide a good illustration of this. Their pages and especially their covers rarely feature the average coloured women who constitute the majority of the female population. More often than not, these publications prefer to showcase very fair-skinned, even blonde models whereas such phenotypes are actually quite exceptional on the island. The covers of a monthly magazine for Mauritian women over a 7-month period were found to have only one featuring a coloured woman. Even the rare supplements dedicated to men's beauty adopt such practices!

In fact, most of the Mauritian media still have a long distance to travel on the road to gender equality, despite some laudable progress. Although the number of women who have joined the ranks of media companies is on the rise, almost reaching parity in some of the big organisations, the structure of ownership and editorship in the industry remains locked into a glass ceiling effect as very few women make it to the top of their respective hierarchies. Within the newsrooms populated by women, the distribution of news beats is unequal across gender categories and there is

imbalance in the repartition of voices, which are given to be heard. Finally, stereotypical reporting is like a monster, which rears its head very regularly despite the efforts to rein it in.

2.3 A MULTI-PRONGED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Many studies have adopted an “either or” method. Rather than ascribe ourselves to a particular methodological approach, we have sought to address the issue by studying structural gaps and using quantitative content analysis as well as qualitative enquiry.

In this section, we present the three different aspects of the Mauritian media, which are investigated as well as the relevant methodological tools, which have been used, namely:

1. The production side of the media industry through an examination of their structures and a survey of working journalists;
2. The output of main media companies through a systematic content analysis; and
3. The perceptions and attitudes of actors of the media industry through a qualitative survey with working journalists and news executives.

2.3.1 BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE MEDIA PROFESSION

Research focusing on the media production side examines the production actors and processes at work within the various sectors of the industry, particularly within news media and film. What really happens behind the scenes, that is, who produces the news and who owns the news media? We seek to address questions of ownership, editorship and newsroom hierarchy in media houses in Mauritius.

In his book *'The New Media Monopoly'*, Bagdikian (1983, 2004) denounced the increased concentration of ownership in the media, in the world. The local press industry has similarly seen major buy overs/mergers and the launch of new products by dominant players for increased market share resulting in the emergence and consolidation of local media barons who also happen to be all male. Furthermore, the latter seems to be assisted by editors who are mostly male themselves. A systematic study of the hierarchy within mainstream media groups is thus needed to confirm the state of affairs. One also needs to ascertain whether there is any glass ceiling effect and, if so, to ask how far the vision of male executives and editors who hold decision-making powers impact on the world-views, which are promoted by their media houses. The gender of those occupying top posts and decision-making roles may indeed shape news processes and the representation of gender roles within news stories.

The first part of the study thus charts out the distribution of male to female executives and editors in the local media industry.

2.3.2 THE OUTPUT OF THE MAIN MEDIA COMPANIES

The second methodological tool: content analysis, which covers thematic aspects such as topics, language and graphical content, is useful for uncovering dominant discourses, which are vehiculated, even promoted by the mass media. This part of our research aimed at exploring the real extent of coverage given to gender issues within a one month period and the insidious nature of sexism in news media through in-depth content analysis. More precisely, it has sought to investigate, inter alia, the following key dimensions:

1. Gender distribution in authorship of top news and hard news;
2. Repartition of beats to male and female journalists;
3. Gender distribution of sources used for news stories;
4. Gender distribution of voices heard through direct quotes; and
5. Representation of gender roles within the news stories.

The content published by six key print publications during the November-December 2014 electoral campaign was analysed for the above. A total of 664 articles were thus systematically scrutinised. The newspapers highlighted in Table 2.1 below were selected as per their popularity as reported by the readership survey conducted by TNS Analysis in 2014, which was the latest available at the time of the study.

Table 2.1: Rankings of Papers in TNS Analysis Readership Survey on Mauritian Newspapers

	Day	Name	Position
Dailies	Monday	Le Défi Quotidien	2
		L'express	8
		Le Matinal	11
	Tuesday	Le Défi Quotidien	3
		L'express	6
	Wednesday	Le Défi Quotidien	1
		L'express	10
	Thursday	Le Défi Quotidien	4
		L'express	9
	Friday	Le Défi Quotidien	5
		L'express	7

Weeklies	Saturday	Le Défi Plus	3
		L'express Samedi	6
	Sunday	5 Plus Dimanche	1
		Week-End	2
		Le Défi/Le Dimanche/L'Hebdo	4
		L'express Dimanche	5

Source: Author's Compilation

Note: In bold are the papers included in this study's sample.

The two top dailies from the main media houses were selected for analysis as well as four weeklies as the latter garner bigger readership. Care was taken to provide a varied sample from across different media houses, while considering readership ratings. The sample of newspaper for weekday dailies thus included *Le Défi Quotidien* and *L'express*. According to the results of the 2014 TNS Analysis readership survey, *Le Défi Quotidien* occupied the first five positions on various days in readership as a weekday daily newspaper. The next competitor is *L'express*, which occupied the next five slots and was ranked in the sixth position as a weekday daily. As for the third weekday daily, *Le Matinal*, which was not included in the sample, trailed very far behind at the last position (11th) due to a very weak readership. It has in fact closed down following the elections as it lost government spending when the party it was supporting failed at the ballots.

In the weeklies market, the TNS Analysis survey combined both Saturday and Sunday papers. Since there were only two Saturday papers in the ranking, namely *Le Défi Plus* and *L'express Samedi*, both were included in the sample. In fact, since *L'express Samedi* is produced by the same team as the weekday daily *L'express*, its issues were considered together with the other daily *L'express* issues.

Concerning the Sunday papers, the first two papers were naturally included, namely (i) *5 Plus Dimanche*, which is produced by a totally different team within the Sentinelle Group and which tops the ranking, and (ii) *Week-End*, which is published by another media group, namely Le Mauricien Group, a group which did not appear in the dailies ranking but came in second in the weeklies ranking. It was deemed important to include a third Sunday paper based on the popularity and circulation of this type of paper on the island. *L'express Dimanche* was selected despite coming after *Le Défi/Le Dimanche/L'Hebdo* due to the fact that, although published by La Sentinelle, the former was also produced by a different team from the daily team, contrary to *Le Défi/Le Dimanche/L'Hebdo*.

It should here be noted that most of the popular newspapers of Mauritius are published primarily in French. Hence, the corpus of articles, which was examined consisted mainly of articles in French.

2.3.3 PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF MEDIA WORKERS

This study would not be complete without the opinions of the media workers who are called upon to execute the decisions and policies of their executives. For the third part of our research, qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey with more than 50 journalists from print media, radio and television were used to uncover the perceptions and attitudes of media workers. It was deemed to be extremely important that their views be sought so that the reality on the ground as experienced by these men and women may be exposed rather than merely commenting from the safety of the outside. The sample covered regular reporters as well as top media executives, editors-in-chief and retired seasoned journalists.

The survey was conducted in March 2015 over a three-week period. Twenty-eight (28) male and twenty-nine (29) female journalists responded to the online survey [including three (3) members of the LGBTI community]. Additionally, four (4) male and two (2) female executives from big and small media houses also responded. At least one (1) decision-maker from each significant media house has been approached for an interview. The journalists have been interviewed using online survey tools to gather information about the realities of gender-sensitive reporting in their respective newsrooms and in the Mauritian media in general. They were interviewed about gender balance in the newsrooms and in the content produced as well as occurrence of incidents involving gender discrimination. Care was taken to provide anonymity to the respondents in order to allow them to express themselves freely while protecting them from any potential harassment as a result of their participation in the survey.

Dimensions, which were explored, include:

1. the personal beliefs and perceptions of the media executives about gender balance;
2. the perception of the general gender composition, policy and culture within the newsroom;
3. personal awareness and effort to contribute to gender balance in the newsroom and in news stories;
4. how situations or incidents involving gender dimensions are tackled in the newsroom; and
5. attitudes about cases of gender imbalance in content produced by own media house as compared to other media houses.

2.4 KEY FINDINGS

2.4.1 THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

Access to decision-making: Who owns and who manages news media?

Very often, media owners claim that they are in favour of women empowerment and are trying their utmost best to promote gender equality within their newsrooms and in their editorial content. However, one has to acknowledge that commercial imperatives and lazy journalism are still prevalent and that the gender agenda is often given due credence only for International Women's Day or when a plethora of gender-based crimes dominates the news. Could this be due to the gender composition of the media industry itself? Indeed, Shivdas (2000) notes that women have restricted access and participation in decision making in the media industries and governing authorities that manage formulation and implementation of media policies.

At the time of our study, there were four main print media groups in Mauritius, namely:

- **La Sentinelle Ltd:** This media house published one daily, seven weeklies, two monthlies and multiple other periodicals. It also had a multimedia platform including a website, a mobile app, a web radio and a web TV channel.
- **Le Défi Media Group:** This media house published one daily, three weeklies and multiple other periodicals. It also had a multimedia platform including a website, a web radio and a web TV.
- **Le Mauricien Group:** This media house published one daily and three weeklies.
- **APCA / Le Matinal:** This media house used to publish one daily, one weekly and other periodicals.

There were three private radio stations, namely:

- **Radio Plus** (owned by Le Défi Media Group),
- **Radio One** (owned by Viva Voce, and previously associated with La Sentinelle Ltd), and
- **Top FM.**

The historical public broadcaster, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) also aired multiple radio and TV channels. Its most popular radio channels were: Best FM Radio, Radio Mauritius, Kool FM Radio, Music FM Radio, Taal FM Radio whereas its TV channels were: MBC1, MBC2, MBC3, MBC Digital 4 TV and Cine 12. It should be noted that, for the MBC stations, where there is broadcasting of news formats, these usually fall under the responsibility of a common News section, which is headed by a single person.

All four main print media groups, private radio stations and public broadcaster are directed by male CEOs and have males as majority shareholders. In fact, none of the key directors of media houses in Mauritius spanning the written press, radio, television and online news media are women. There is a relative invisibility of women in boardrooms and senior management. It is only at the secondary level of executive management that female faces may be found and, even so, they are more often confined to marketing or sales functions whilst the male ones dominate the core functions such as director of publications or head of news. Thus, women's increasing presence in the profession does not necessarily indicate their empowerment within media structures (Chambers *et al.*, 2004) as may be ascertained by the analysis below.

Table 2.2: Number of Female Editors-in-Chief in Mainstream Media in Mauritius

Media type	No. of editors-in-chief	No. of female editors-in-chief	Remarks
Main generalist dailies	5	0	Not a single female editor-in-chief.
Generalist weeklies	9	3	The three female editors-in-chief are respectively at the helm of one tabloid, one English medium publication with a niche audience and the third one has never been officially announced as editor-in-chief.
Weekly business publications	3	1	The only woman acts as replacement for the male editor-in-chief who has taken leave to become a political advisor.
People / entertainment / women's publications	3	1	The female editor-in-chief heads a women's magazine.
Monthly specialised magazine	4	1	The female editor-in-chief heads a magazine dedicated to interior design and home décor.
Private radio stations	3	1	The only female editor-in-chief did not benefit from any special announcement as opposed to usual practice.
Public broadcaster (TV and radio)	1	0	There has never been a female Head of News at the MBC.
Total	28	7	Women account for only 25% of top news executives.

Source: Author's Compilation

When we include more subaltern positions, it can be noticed that there is no significant improvement as there are only nine (9) women out of thirty three (33) editors-in-chief and deputy chief-editors combined (24%). This is in line with the findings of the Glass Ceilings in Southern African Media Houses Study (2009), which showed that women constituted 41% of those working in the media and 28% of those in management. A worrying aspect is that the ratios in Mauritius are not likely to improve for top editorship positions in the near future, as there are very few women who are editors-in-chief in the waiting. The glass ceiling may have allowed a few women to slip through but it seems that it will be harder to crack for the new generation of journalists due to what could be termed a sticky floor effect (Bihagen and Ohls, 2006). Women are more likely to be at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy and there are not enough women at the top to act as mentors for their juniors.

A further examination of the women's editorship positions shows that they are either in niche or in women's publications or are only there to replace a male counterpart who has taken temporary leave. Some hold an unofficial position or just a title with no real decision-making power. Others have been given a position but without any public communication about their status in comparison to when their male counterparts are appointed. This confirms that *"women have had more success as editors of Sunday national newspapers, which aim to attract women readers. Editors traditionally succeed through the magazine and feature route, the fields in which women dominate."* (Chambers et al., 2004, p.98).

As for regulatory agencies such as the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA), since their inception and up to 2015, they have all been directed by male chairpersons and directors. There have only been a handful of women in some of their committees and subcommittees.

It is however laudable that one woman editor-in-chief, Michaella Seblin, was elected to the board of the Media Trust (an organisation responsible for the provision of short training and seminars for professional journalists in Mauritius) by garnering the most votes from the media community in March 2015. Her newspaper, *5 Plus Dimanche*, enjoys the largest readership in the weeklies' market and has made great progress from its beginnings as a typical sensationalist tabloid to a more social issues paper (although it retains a predominantly 'people and crime' approach to reporting).

²Many publications do not have the position of deputy editor-in-chief.

2.4.2 MEDIA OUTPUT

GENDER DISTRIBUTION: TOP AND HARD NEWS ARE MOSTLY ASSIGNED TO MALE JOURNALISTS

Beyond the structure of the newsroom hierarchy, it is important to examine the content being churned out by those publications to determine whether the weakness of women representation at the top level is harming gender balance in the allocation of beats at the lower levels as well as the dominant images about gender roles being dished out to the audiences at large.

First, we looked at bylines in order to assess distribution of beats by gender. Out of the 664 articles, which were published in the six main print publications during the period of study, 394 were signed using first names (and surnames) and, thus, could be analysed to determine the gender of their authors with a particular focus on whether their articles were treated as top news or secondary news as per the table below.

Table 2.3: Gender Distribution of Articles for Top and Secondary News

Number of articles signed by...	Top news	Secondary news	Total items
A woman	41	135	176
A man	68	150	218

Within this sample, it was found that only 38% of all the signed articles which were given priority treatment as top news (that is, they were featured on cover pages or given big headlines and space) were written by women.

Table 2.4: Gender Distribution by Signed Top News

Articles signed by...	% of <u>all signed</u> top news	% of <u>all signed</u> secondary news
A woman	38	47
A man	62	53

This represents a large gap considering that there is near parity and in many cases, a majority of women journalists in the newsrooms concerned. In terms of the beats covered per gender, it was found that 59% of the signed hard news articles were written by men whereas women signed only 41% of them. There is much less of a gender gap in secondary news treatment (53% of signed secondary news items were written by men and 47% were written by women). Although there are more and more women in the newsrooms and they get to write news stories, the hierarchy of news is still subject to the glass ceiling effect as women are less deemed to be able to produce top news stories. Thus, *“women are still concentrated in sectors considered to be ‘soft’ news, such as those with an emphasis on ‘human interest’ stories, features and the delivery of a magazine-style of journalism”* (Chambers et al., 2004, p.98), which are less likely to become headline stories.

MEDIA SOURCES BY GENDER: DESPITE SOME EFFORTS , THERE IS STILL MAJOR IMBALANCE

The gender distribution of sources used within media stories gives interesting indications about the newsroom's policy regarding gender-sensitive reporting. Although it may not be possible to provide balance at all times on all issues, efforts to reduce the gap can contribute towards the realisation of a more inclusive and democratic society. For years, the numbers have indicated a glaring gap and according to the Gender Links Media Barometer for 2014, women accounted for only 21% of all media sources in the 13 SADC countries, which were monitored.

In our study, out of the 465 sources who were quoted in the articles published, 70% were found to be male and 30% female, based on the first names referred to. **All tables below are worked out from the survey data collected in 2015.** This confirms a great imbalance in the gender distribution of sources irrespective of status (expert/official or ordinary) which sets us very far from the 50% target of Gender Links, which had been set for 2015.

Table 2.5: Gender Distribution of all Sources Used in Media Stories

All sources	Total numbers	%
Male	326	70
Female	139	30
Total	465	100

The gap is even bigger when it comes to the sources that are quoted as experts or official spokespersons since 76% of these were male and only 24% were female.

Table 2.6: Gender Distribution of Expert or Official Sources Used in Media Stories

Expert and official sources	Total numbers	%
Male	228	76
Female	72	24

The balance of sources improves only when considering those who are quoted as ordinary ones (e.g. citizens expressing their viewpoints in a vox pop) as 59 % of them were male compared with 41% female ordinary sources. Thus, news media seem to provide a dystopian view: experts are primarily men while women mostly act as mere witnesses. Women primarily assist and comment as bystanders but they rarely construct the world or shape opinions.

WHICH BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION: DOES THE GENDER OF THE JOURNALISTS INFLUENCE THE CHOICE OF MALE OR FEMALE SOURCES ?

When male journalists write and cite experts or official spokespersons as primary sources, 80% of these are male and only 20% are female. When female journalists write and cite experts, 71% of these experts are male and 29% are female. Thus, there is still a large domination of male sources as experts and official spokespersons despite a very slight effort on the part of female journalists.

Table 2.7: Do Women Source more Women?

Sourcing - Do women source more women?	% by male journalists	% by female journalists
Primary sources who are male and are quoted as experts or have spokesperson status	80	71
Primary sources who are female and are quoted as experts or have spokesperson status	20	29

When male journalists write and cite ordinary sources, 76% of these sources are male and 24% are female. When female journalists write and cite ordinary sources, 47% of these sources are male and 53% are female. **Thus, female journalists seem to be making much more efforts to cite women as ordinary sources.** Female journalists are possibly trying to reduce the gap in terms of the gender distribution of their sources and actually may be trying to compensate the great divide in expert sources by significantly increasing the proportion of women as ordinary sources.

GENDER-BASED FOCUS IN ARTICLES

Out of the 192 articles, which focused on a single person, only 40% were dedicated to women. It was also found that women write more about women while men write more about men. It is indeed a natural behaviour to report about your own gender category. However, the imbalance is great: compared to a hypothetical 50-50 balance, male journalists devote 26% more of their stories to their own gender whereas women devote only 5% more to their own gender.

However, it is to be acknowledged that the Mauritian media make less irrelevant references to people's domestic and family life as only nine articles out of 664 made such references. The very low numbers were similar for women and men too. Nevertheless, most of the time, it was female journalists who tended to do so!

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION BY GENDER

Of all the 672 pictures, which were published during the period of study, 36% focused on women and 64% on men. This is in line with the gender distribution of articles focusing on a single person and the gender distribution of all sources, which have been quoted in all articles. Women are thus largely numerically inferior to men in representation in the newspapers' content although they make up a little more than half of the population in the country (50.5% as per national statistics).

When women are pictured, 37% of these are as main focus and 63% as secondary focus. However, when men are pictured, 49% are as main focus, 51% as secondary focus. Thus, women are more often used as background subjects or "faire-valoir" (acting as foil) for the men who take centre stage.

Table 2.8: Are Women more to be looked at?

Number of pictures focusing on...	% As main focus	% As secondary characters
Women	37	63
Men	49	51

It would be wrong to affirm that the commercial exploitation of bodies in newspapers only concerns women. However, it is undeniable that the proportion of women's bodies, which are flaunted in these publications, is thrice that of men since 30% of all pictures which feature women exploit their physical attributes in a gratuitous manner (compared to 10% of all men's pictures). A special sports pages in a daily newspaper was in fact a mere pretext to display the sportswomen's sensuous bodies mostly clad in sexy swimwear with little or no reference to their sports performances. Such stereotypical treatment of women in media content participates in the reinforcement of gender inequalities in society.

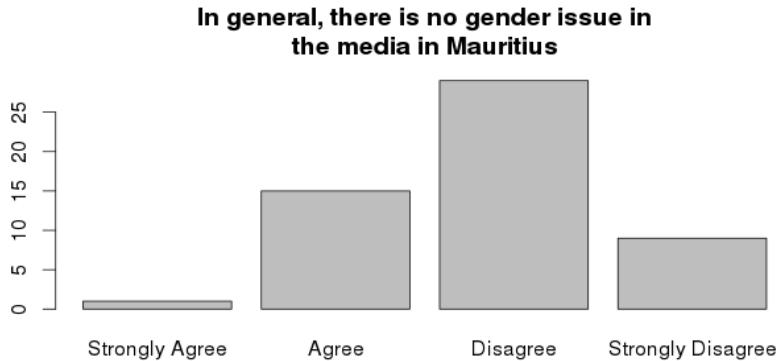
Examples abound, especially during elections time when women would be primarily depicted as nice supporters of the political parties who are present in the pages of the publications in order to please the eye.

"One of the greatest challenges facing journalists, both men and women, is to resist the culture of casual stereotype in our everyday work. That is no easy task when media are full of images and cliché about women and girls. Many are relatively harmless, but some, often the most powerful, portray women as objects of male attention -- the glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, the devious witch, the hard-faced corporate and political climber." –White, International Federation of Journalists General Secretary (Preface to International Federation of Journalists Handbook on Gender Equality in the Media: iv.).

2.4.3 MEDIA WORKERS ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

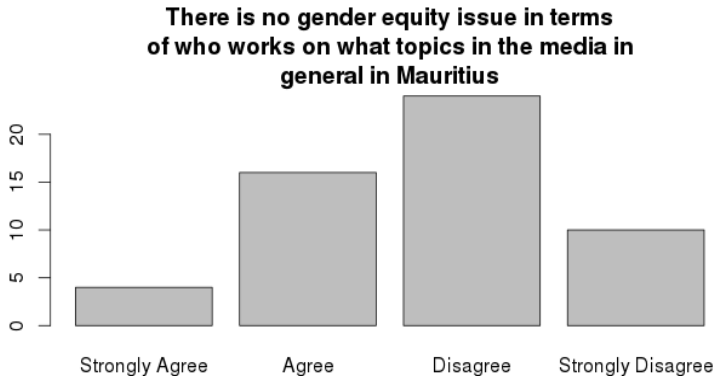
In the third part of our study, we interviewed twenty eight (28) male and twenty nine (29) female media workers as well as four (4) male and two (2) female news executives. The objective was to uncover their perceptions of how balanced newsrooms were with respect to gender representation within both the organisation's structure and the content being produced by the media houses. **All figures below are derived from the survey data collected in 2015.** Despite the fact that most media executives report that their media company enjoy a growing feminisation of their workforce, the journalists who responded to the survey were split on whether there was balance in the gender distribution of media workers. However, the majority of journalists (7 out of 10) still felt that there were gender-related issues in the media in Mauritius, including in their own media houses.

Figure 2.1: Perception of gender balance amongst media workers



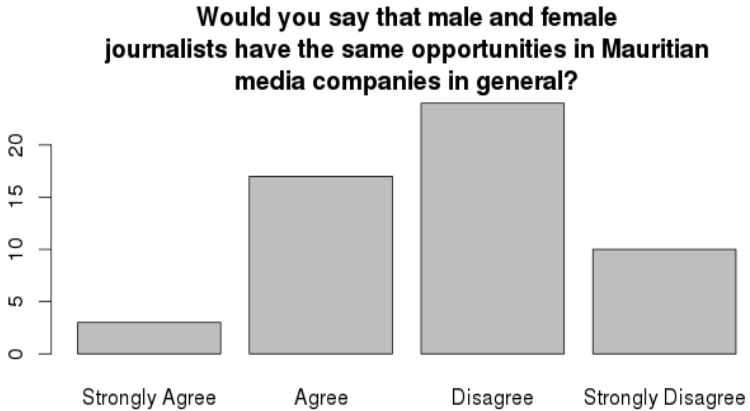
There is a marked perception of imbalance within the newsrooms themselves with regards to the gender distribution of beats to be covered.

Figure 2.2: Perception of gender equity in topic distribution



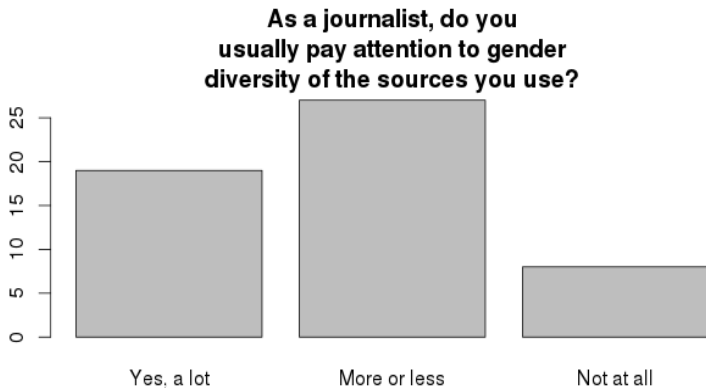
Most (6 out of 10) felt that the opportunities to climb up the ladder of media companies were not the same for men and women although the respondents naturally tended to have a more favourable opinion of their own media house.

Figure 2.3: Perception of opportunities by gender



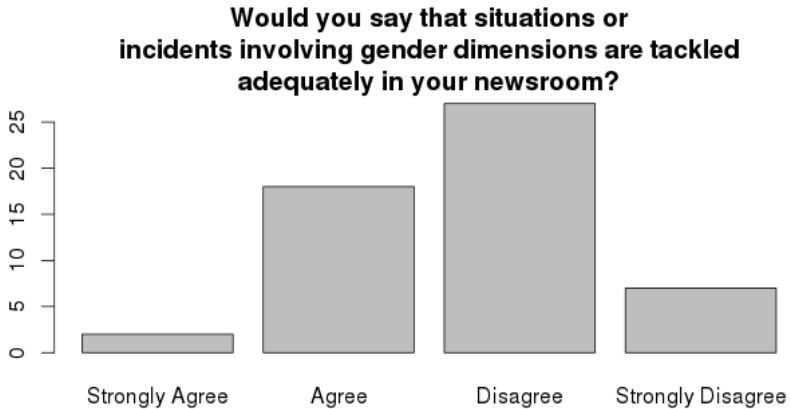
They also had primarily a positive opinion about gender balance in media content in general, which is a rather normal response as they are the ones producing the media content. However, less than four (4) out of ten (10) journalists declared that they pay attention to the gender diversity of sources, which they use in their news stories, with a majority stating that they more or less consider this parameter, meaning that it is not considered as essential. Conversely, most stated that they pay attention to words and expressions as well as illustrations used so as not to discriminate against any gender category.

Figure 2.4: Attention paid to gender diversity of sources



Four (4) out of ten (10) journalists reported knowledge about a gender-related incident in their own media company. More than half of these respondents stated that they have had to intervene personally to solve the issue and more than six (6) out of ten (10) felt that such types of incidents were not tackled adequately by their media house.

Figure 2.5: Solving incidents with gender dimension



DECISION-MAKERS

According to the statements made by the six news executives, overall, 66% of their staff were women. Four (4) stated that they had a majority of women and one led a small newsroom made up of women only. Four (4) out of six (6) news executives thought there were general issues in gender balance in the media in Mauritius but only one acknowledged this as an issue in the newsroom. All clearly believed that there are major gender balance issues in the ownership and management of Mauritian media. Only two news executives agreed that there were issues with the gender repartition of beats, the very same who evoked the occurrence of gender-based incidents in their newsrooms. One (1) evoked incident, which demonstrated a lack of respect for women who were chiefs of sections, often as objects of ridicule within the newsroom. The other evoked the case of a male journalist who believed that he was entitled to cover a hard news item involving a political beat rather than his female colleague. In both incidents, the news executive claimed to have successfully intervened.

In general, although the news executives tended to acknowledge the existence of a gender problem in newsrooms, they mostly believed that the problems were found in other newsrooms rather than in their own whether in terms of hierarchies within the organisation or in terms of content produced. All claimed to pay attention to the gender diversity of sources to avoid stereotyping of women in their publications,

whether in the wording or the illustrations used. Only two stated that there were clear and explicit rules about gender discrimination in their respective newsrooms.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the Mauritian mass media through gender lenses: their global and internal hierarchies as well as the content they produce.

The Mauritian media still have a long way to go to achieve gender equality and not just parity as a window-dressing strategy. Despite the feminisation of the media workforce, the structure of ownership and editorship in the industry remains locked into a glass ceiling effect as women account for only 25% of the top news executives. Within the newsrooms populated by women, the distribution of news beats remains unequal and there is still imbalance in the repartition of voices, which are given to be heard. Top and hard news are still mostly assigned to male journalists (59%), some of whom feel that it is a normal entitlement for men to cover such beats. The majority of sources used in news stories were male: 70% of all sources and 76% in the case of official and expert sources. Men are thus primarily showcased as experts while women tended to be showcased as ordinary bystanders and secondary characters, especially in pictorial representation where both genders appeared (64% of all 672 pictures put their primary focus on men).

Stereotypical reporting is like a monster, which rears its head very regularly despite the efforts to combat it. This can be seen not only in the gender roles assigned to women but also in the clear exploitation of the female body even in fields where their competencies are supposed to be the focus of the stories. In media stories, men are more easily showcased as experts who construct the world and shape opinions, while women are mostly used as mere witnesses. Both male and female journalists appear to uphold this dystopian view of the gendered roles in the world. However, female journalists seem to be making much more efforts than their male counterparts are when it comes to citing women as ordinary sources, a category where the perennial excuse of unavailability of women cannot be made. Indeed, male journalists showcase only 24% female voices as ordinary sources while female journalists showcase 53%. In articles focusing on a single person, male journalists devote 26% more of their stories to their own gender whereas women devote only 5% more to their own gender. Women's bodies are more readily flaunted in a gratuitous manner (30% of all women's pictures compared to 10% of all men's pictures). Women's voices are thus minimised but their bodies are maximised.

The media workers themselves perceive a problem in gender balance both within the newsrooms and within the contents produced with only four (4) out of ten (10) stating that they pay attention to gender diversity of the voices they showcase in their own stories. Only two (2) out of six (6) news executives claimed to have clear guidelines and policies about gender in their respective newsrooms despite their awareness about the need for more gender-sensitive reporting in Mauritius.

It is our belief that there is a serious responsibility to be shouldered by the news media in the struggle towards gender equality. For instance, it is high time that the media focus on highlighting inequalities, which require policy responses, rather than exploiting their victims. Conversely, media houses need to realise that they risk participating in non-resolution and reinforcement of inequalities by downplaying women's issues when they consider these as either merely a category's claims or even a non-subject.

Self-regulation is also of the essence. A Gender Code of Ethics was previously proposed and received positive responses when published. However, few seem to have given serious thought to its content and application in the absence of a self-regulatory body for the profession. Despite the public stance of goodwill by news media executives, commercial imperatives and basic instincts in reporting always come back to the forefront. Continuous monitoring and training remain the only viable answers to the issue for the time being in order to remind us all that:

"News media are at their best when they call upon the wisdom of all the people whom they serve, when they reflect everyone's experience and bring in the hopes and dreams and fears of every sort of person."

(Women's Media Center, The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2014, p.76)

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