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HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCHES
A COLLECTION OF ACADEMIC PAPERS

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Dedicated to

All humans around the globe who stand up to defend human rights

Preface

“Human Rights Researches; a Collection of Academic Papers”, is an annual publication published by International Human Rights Organization, Sri Lanka, which acts as an award winning public platform to strengthen global human rights discussion, to promote knowledge through new research and to search for practical solutions in a collective manner. The main objective of this annual collection of Academic Papers is to update the relationship between the scientific and literary world in relation to human rights issues that occur in the global environment, reforms, legal trends, and developing international policies. In addition, this acts as a mechanism to express one’s own opinion and beliefs especially to the researchers, lawyers, policy makers, human rights organizations and university partners.

In the modern era we live in, risks and challenges into human rights are explicitly exposed annually. Changes incurred in the fields of technical sophistication, social transformation, relationship between defence and civilian rights, environmental and political pollution, constitutional conversion and cultural extremism must be specially attended. In such complex phenomenon, a dire necessity of new ideas, reliable data, and scientific evidence can be seen at present.

This Collection of Academic Papers is based on research fields of Human Rights Concept and History, social and cultural concepts, responsibility of state and non-state activists, critical legal analysis and new legal understanding based on previous liabilities. Especially, the modern concepts including relationship between the development and the environment, effects of distant technical control and privacy in internet community have been analyzed in a complex manner.

This Collection of Academic Papers is a new voice for the human rights investigators. Each and every article included in this book has been gone through a double reviewing process and that’s the specialty of this book. We wish to state that this Collection of Academic Papers will be helpful in referring Sri Lanka deeply into the global human rights discussion than the last year. Finally, I am thankful to all the researchers and Review Board who took part in composing this Collection of Articles and the International Human Rights Association in Sri Lanka expects to publish this continuously and annually. Every human shall live in equal dignity and freedom and this Collection of Articles acts as a dialogue to this concept.

Dr. Ediriweera Gunasekera, Senior Lecturer Raveendra Samarawickrama

(Chief Editors)

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A New Paradigm in Rawlsian Model for an Ethical and Reasonable Control in Artificial Intelligence

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Summary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a paradigm that transforms the society rapidly and it is already becoming an institution which can create innovative technologies inclusive of forecasts, predications and automation. However, this improvement addresses deep ethical, social and issues related to the justice inclusive of equality, transparency and protecting marginalized groups. This study presents an Ethical Conceptual Framework in Designing, Controlling and Appreciating Artificial Intelligence and it is designed using the Principles of Justice by John Rawls which include “Freedom, Equality and the Principle of Anomaly”. This Study conducts a Literature Review through a quality and theoretical process and it has been formatted how Rowlsian Principles can be used for current usages.

Main Terms: Artificial Intelligence, John Rawls, Justice, Equality, Control

Introduction

The philosophical idea about Artificial Intelligence goes back as far as many centuries. Many centuries ago, Philosophers such as René Descartes and Leibniz have given their ideas onto the capability to mechanize the logic (Valea, 2001). In modern definition, experiments on Artificial Intelligence have been carried out in the 20th Century. In 1936, Alan Turing presented an idea that intellectual reasoning can be done with the use of machines and the Turing Test was done in 1950 (Moor, 2003, p.1). This is a historical moment when it comes to the beginning of Artificial Intelligence. The idea about Artificial Intelligence was officially

theorized in the middle of 1950s. In Dartmouth Workshop that was held in 1956, Jon McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester and Claude Shannon officially affirmed this as a Concept. Initial Artificial Intelligence researches were based on symbolical reasoning, problem solving and programmes based on reasoning. In the decade of 1960, the researches on Artificial Intelligence was mainly based on Symbolic Artificial Intelligence and the Researchers' concern was mainly based not on the learning capacity of data or machines but was on logical reasoning (Dingli, 2023, p.24). Systems such as ELIZA which was introduced in 1966, tried to imitate human conversations and specialist systems such as MYCIN and XCN put an effort into creating a set of rules to imitate the knowledge and decision making process of human scientists (Fox, 2025, p.496). Even though these efforts showed somewhat success they had many limitations.

The decade of 1970 and 1980, witnessed a setback in the researches related to Artificial Intelligence which is known as the AI Winters (Sarıkaya, 2024). In the decade of 1990, a new trend in researches related to Artificial Intelligence could be witnessed and the researches were transferred from researches based on rules to learning based on data. Some of the Specialists identify this transformation as the Era of Machine Learning. Garry Kasparov, a Chess grandmaster defeat by Deep Blue System which was invented by IBM Company in 1997 is considered a significant moment in this (Hsu, 2022, p.74). The improvement in Big Data and Graphic Processing Units later on contributed to the rapid development in this research field and the Artificial Intelligence was moved on to Deep Learning Researches (Wang, 2024, p.9). In 2010, the use of Neural Networks marked a giant leap forward in the Artificial Intelligence studies. In 2012, AlexNet totally changed the computer vision field. A rapid development occurred in the field of Natural Languages Process and in the decade of 2020, a vast transformation was seen in relation to Generative Artificial Intelligence. These models enabled the capability to data training via big Data Systems and GPT-series (Open AI), BERT (Google), LLaMA (Meta) and Claude (Anthropic) can be drawn as few examples (Hon, 2024, p.457). The capability to generate texts, pictures, audio and video content was derived through Artificial Intelligence and its accuracy sometimes equalled to the human

competency. Artificial Intelligence has already affecting the day to day life and this has caused many social and ethical issues.

When discussing ethical issues caused in relation to Artificial Intelligence, principles of John Rawls (1921-2002) will be used in this study. John Rawls is considered the most influential political and moral philosopher and his Theory of Justice plays a pivotal role. Even though his book “A Theory of Justice” which was published in 1971, is many decades old, the principles outlined in this book can be still successfully utilized to solve the issues pertaining to the current world (Rawls 2009). His main argument was “Justice as Fairness” and two more concepts of “original position” and “veil of ignorance” were also presented (Rawls, 2009, p.23).

Original Position is a thought experiment and in this it imagines of a situation where people get together to choose rules for a society. It was assumed that these people are unaware of any of differences they carry and divide them such as gender, nationality, talents, social status, wealth, skills or personal objectives. Thus, this Thought Experiment was conducted through the concept of veil of ignorance (Oborune, 2010, p.2). Certifying impartiality is an objective of this concept while assuming that since the people are not aware about their social position they are unable to compose rules that are favourable to themselves. Thus, it is expected to identify principles of justice which everyone can agree to, disregarding the personal situations. In an Original Position, all logical people try to assume a situation where any person gets minimum benefits. Thus, they will all agree to rules that are favourable to everyone. Thus, Rawls has presented two principles of Justice which are Equal Freedom for Everyone and Social and Economic Inequality. If a social and economic inequality to incur such inequality shall occur in a situation where the less privileged feel beneficial. This is considered Difference Principle (Chatterjee, 2011, p.403). In other words, every inequality (in wealth, income or social status) is only justified if it improves the status of less-privileged. Rawls’ theory gives a special attention in to the less-privileged and he has explained how to pay attention to the poorest and the most vulnerable in designing principles and composing procedures (Cohen, 2009, p.207). However, Rawls accept the fact that a society constitutes

of inequalities and he does not present an idea about absolute equality (Rawls & Kelly, 2001, p.43). Differences, acted for the benefit of everyone, especially in favour of the less-privileged, it will be accepted in this Rawlsian Model. Rationalization in the veil of ignorance is that it is inevitable for the people in the original position to agree with this principle.

This study examines the whether this model which is designed with justice, equality and peoples' intrinsic values can be used for Artificial Intelligence. In here it is investigated how Rawls' ideas of Original Position, Veil of Ignorance, Two Principles of Justice and Difference Principle can be utilized for the control and development of Artificial Intelligence. The data used for Artificial Intelligence is not purely objective and some data is full of flexibilities. For an example during the researches it was revealed that partiality and flexibility can be seen when selections are done via Artificial Intelligence in recruiting for jobs and other recruitments, giving loans and Police activities. Black and White Distinction has been inserted into the algorithm and there is more chance that the traditionally privileged will be favoured. Learning Machines can be connected with Rawls' vision of theory and philosophy and Difference Principle is considered most important in here. In Learning Machines, Artificial Intelligence algorithms can be organized more reasonably in bringing a paradigm that certifies creating a principle that the less-privileged will be beneficial. When designing forecasts models, Veil of Ignorance can be used. Algorithm Flexibilities occur when Artificial Intelligence models learn patterns when data used in the history is used (Verma, Singla & Mittal, 2024, p.297). If the current data depicts social inequalities, Artificial Intelligence systems learn the same and reproduce the same data. Partiality of Software Engineers can be seen embedded to the algorithm either knowingly or unknowingly. For an example, there is a chance that a middle-class Software Engineers' attitude towards the areas where marginalized communities live, to be included in the algorithm. An incomplete painting is drawn in relation to the community groups who do not take part in the training datasets. At a glance, even the moderate inputs can act as proxy variables and might depict slight impartiality when it comes to decision making in relation to nationality, gender equality and social and economic situations. Partial Artificial Intelligence systems gradually learn the

divisions among humans and it creates system anomalies via feedback loops (Mohammed, 2024, p.172). Language Models can reproduce premises such as gender equality, nationality and religion and Sentiment Analysis can falsely categorize the voice of marginalized groups (Rajput, Thakur, & Basha, 2018, p. xvi). According to Rawls' vision, if an equal participation and fair treatment for all groups can be certified, whether Artificial Intelligence based natural language procedures create more disparities or minimize them, should be evaluated (Richardson, 1999, p.135). For an example, a new paradigm to access translation systems, chatbots, and multi languages via Artificial Intelligence systems should be created. Artificial Intelligence technology in Face Identifying, most of the time, identifies women and people belonging to different communities with a flexibility. Surveillance Technology can unusually target the vulnerable people at risks (Wich & Piel, 2021, p.242). Employment displacement that arises as a result of automation, is affecting low-income employees hugely. Further, the army or police robots can harm the marginalized communities with the data they learn via the algorithm. There is also a risk that the partiality in the field of medical science, law and finance can be quality assured. The decisions taken through Artificial Intelligence are more favourable to those who are in power at the moment.

False information and Deepfake unequally harm the vulnerable groups. Through content generation, cultural partiality can be reproduced. It should be certified that Rawls' vision in approach to creative Artificial Intelligence is justifiable and communities should be protected from Artificial Intelligence outputs. (Eg.:Ethical Media Generation, AI tools for education purposes in less-privileged areas). In situations related to justice, there is a risk that some individuals will be affected due to unclear AI decisions. Artificial Intelligence is completely different from the technologies that prevailed in the human history and this technological bounce incurs the following moral issues: Who will be beneficial from AI? Who will be harmed? Who will control this technology? Who will be held responsible when it fails? And most importantly How will be a fair and a just AI controlled society?. When answering these issues, Rawls' theory provides a strong theoretical foundation. Rawls rejects Utilitarian approach. It suggests a justice model based on fair and equal and security for less-privileged.

Since AI Systems shape social arrangements in a structural way, Rawlsian Theory supports in creating an ethical paradigm to act fairly in people's opportunities, rights and life expectations. By applying Rawls' principles in Artificial Intelligence, we can thoroughly evaluate whether the current usages of technology contribute to the foundation of the just society or whether it weakens such foundations.

Research Problem Statement

Artificial Intelligence and digital technology is rapidly developing in the fields of forecasts, sentiments evaluation and spying. Certifying whether these technologies are ethically designed and controlled transparently and operating in a just manner is still a decisive challenge. There is a risk that the current systems based on AI to always confirm social inequalities, to violate privacy and to affect disproportionately to the marginalized groups. This study investigates how Rawls' principles of justice can be applied to regulate Artificial Intelligence in an ethical manner. Through this, it is expected to introduce a fair, transparent and socially responsible new ethical paradigm to Artificial Intelligence.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is mainly on qualitative and theoretical and central focus is given on Artificial Intelligence, ethics and Rawls's principles on justice. This includes a detailed literature review on academic papers and secondary resources related to Artificial Intelligence and Rawls's political philosophy. This study caters in identifying repetitive patterns, ethical issues and issues in equity in designing and applying Artificial Intelligence and formatting such patterns. Based on this analysis, a new Rawlsian model is being developed with new regulations based on ethically transparent, socially responsible and fair systems of Artificial Intelligence.

Research Objectives

- Investigating AI based ethical challenges and social impact emerged in the fields of forecasts, spying and digital technology

- Evaluating how Rawls’s principles of freedom, equality and differences can be used to design, apply and control Artificial Intelligence systems
- Developing a conceptual framework for an Artificial Intelligence system which certifies transparency, fairness and harmonized results for everyone in the society especially for the less-privileged

Results and Discussion

The Rawlsian Model for AI Justice

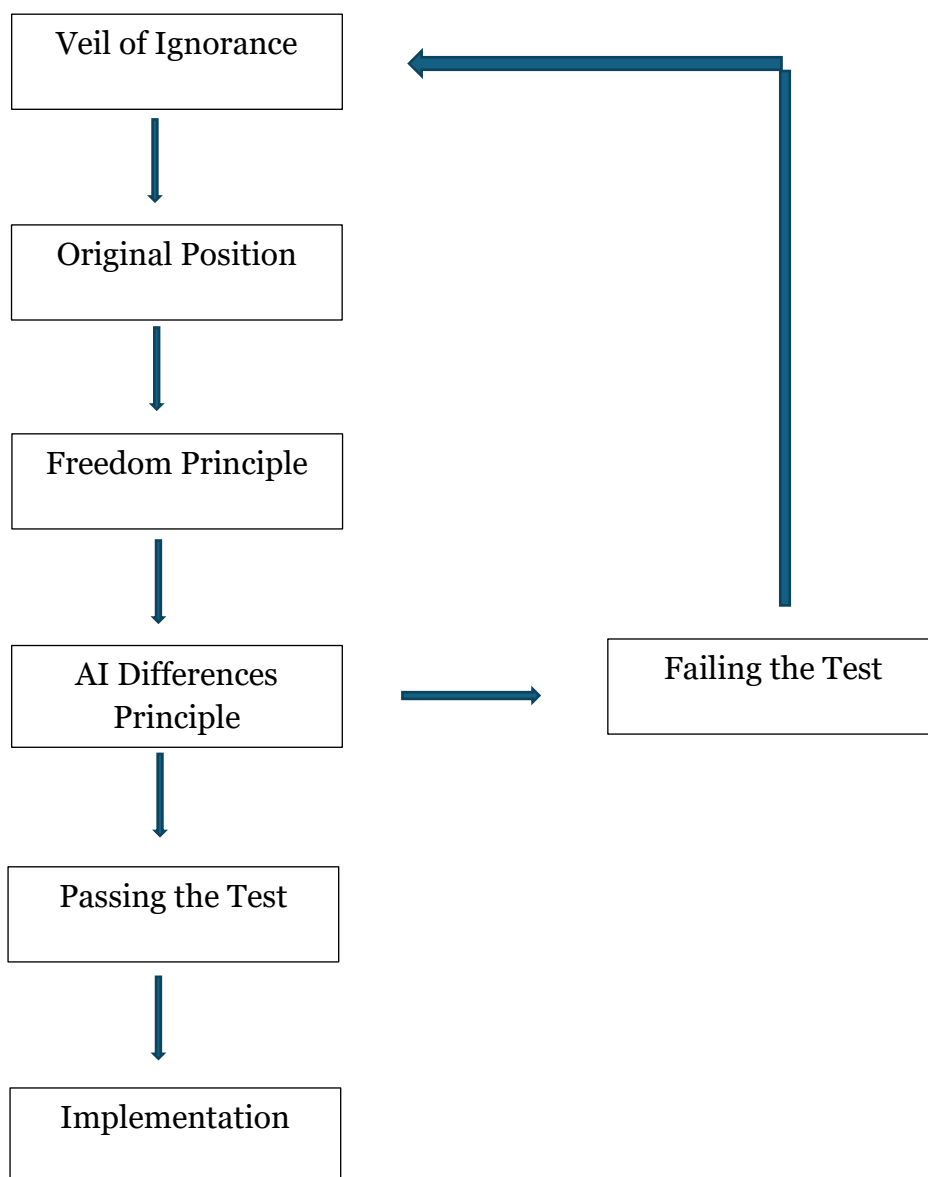


Figure 01: The Rawlsian Model for AI Justice

In this format it will initially replace the concept of Veil of Ignorance to AI. Thus, the designers, policy makers and Institutions shall imaginatively use the veil of ignorance without being aware of the status that they are going to achieve in the society. In this model it is expected that there is a capability to imagine one's self without being bias to being rich or poor, powerful or weak, educated or non-educated, traditionally privileged or less-privileged. In an AI based decision making model, veil of ignorance is used as the starting point and this influences decision makers to design Artificial Intelligence systems without propensity. The second stage of the model is to imagine Original Position. In here, fair laws are being designed for Artificial Intelligence based on the conditions of equality. Designing a paradigm that does not allow shaping of Artificial Intelligence based on personal benefits, political power or economic domination is what is expected.

In here, Artificial Intelligence systems are not merely considered as commercial products but as a new social institution that defend people's opportunities and improve them, reshaping the rights and life results. In this, it is expected to certify justice instead of power as a controlling principle of Artificial Intelligence. Further, instead of the efficiency and profit, the main target will be justice. The next main principle in this model is to replace Equal Liberty Principle to Artificial Intelligence. It is expected to certify that all people have equal rights when interacting with Artificial Intelligence based systems. When a decision is being made or when the decision is made influenced based on an Artificial Intelligence system, It includes right to the human review when making decisions with a higher risk such as right to information, right to privacy, refusing/rejecting some data collection methods, employment opportunities, giving loans, health service and criminal justice. Under this principle it is accepted that no such technical tool can weaken the primary freedom and individual independence. If an Artificial Intelligence based system acts according to privacy, handling or large scale spying, it violates this principle and in this paradigm redesigning and rejecting can be done.

The next main principle used in this model is the AI Difference Principle. In here, it decides how any inequalities incurred via Artificial Intelligence can be justified. Rawls does not argue

that all inequalities are unfair but unfairness can only be accepted if it allows the less-privileged in the society to be beneficial. Even in the AI based systems, poverty, unfairness in less-privileged and insecure people shall be accepted and providing privileges should be certified. For example when designing AI based systems in sectors like health, education and welfare, such systems must grasp the inequalities thoroughly and shall certify benefits to the less-privileged. Whatever the Artificial Intelligence system merely safeguard and quality assure the superiors and certifies benefits only to the Wealthy, Rawls's test is considered a failure.

This model complies with Rawlsian Justice Principles and it introduces a practical evaluating mechanism referred to as Rawlsian AI Test. Each system must be evaluated based on three facts: whether it violates the fundamental rights, whether the benefits can be largely approached and whether it upholds the results of the less-privileged. If the system fails any of these tests, it cannot be justified according to the ethics. This test acts as an ethical filter, it forces the societies to reconsider and restructure harmful technologies before them being largely approved. Finally, this Rawlsian model presents a new ethical paradigm to Artificial Intelligence and its basis is justice. It is requested for strong institutions and it is important to maintain independent review boards, general supervision, transparency in algorithm and anti-monopoly principles to avoid technical power being centralized.

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Practicality in proposed Sri Lankan National Media Policy in contemporary media shaping and assuring the right to information

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Introduction

Numerous and critical social, political, religious and economic issues have arisen due to the lack of a proper National Media Policy in Sri Lanka. In such a situation, after many discussions, a National Media Policy draft has been presented. A National Media Policy means a high level conceptual framework that guides a country to balance media freedom and the fundamental right to the speech on one hand and media responsibility, accountability and the need to defend public welfare on the other hand (Ministry of Mass Media, n.d.). According to US Professor Noam Chomsky (Noam Chomsky-1928), "National Media Policy defends the truth and the difference without being influenced by those who are in power. It respects the intelligence of the public". But it is an inclusion of laws, rules and regulations in a country. It only includes conceptual level acknowledgements, recommendations and guidelines that are required for the well-being and promotion of the relevant field (Samarakoon, 2025). Media is considered as the connecting bridge between the Government and the Public. Thus, socially, the media has a huge responsibility and an accountability to represent the public. Also, the government also has a responsibility as well as an accountability to stand up for media and to give positive solutions to their issues. Thus, when creating a National Media Policy, it has become a timely requirement not to incur unnecessary impacts towards all these tri-parties and not to take unfair decisions.

Thus, it is a positive situation that for the drafted National Media Policy, ideas, reactions and suggestions are being welcomed from the civilians, media agents and media scholars. However, how the proposed National Media Policy will decide the contemporary media

shaping? How will it impact the right to information?, are the main objectives that this article aims to investigate.

General Public's right to information and Media Role

Information is a powerful factor to maintain democracy in the state. In 17th and 18th Centuries, right to information has been considered as a main concept of democracy. It means, in a governing state, the right to information has been acknowledged as a fundamental right. In addition, most of the countries in the world has taken measures to legalize the right to information. This is important in acting transparently about the actions of the government that is the centre of any state. This will enable the general public's right to information.

In the III Paragraph of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, from the freedom of thinking to, speech, expression and access to information are accepted as fundamental human rights. Thus,

- The 10th Constitution affirms and confirms the freedom of thinking, freedom of conscience, and religious freedom.

(Constitution, 2015, 10th Constitution)

- Section 1 (a) in the 14th Constitution, covers every citizen's freedom to speech and expression.

(Constitution, 2015, 14.1.a Constitution)

- Section (a) in the 14th Constitution affirms every citizen's right to access information.

(Constitution, 2015, 14.a. Constitution)

In the Universal Human Rights Declaration made in 1948, the right to communication is declared in the right to hold opinions, expression and the right to obtain information and opinions from any of the media. Further, in the 18th Session of UNESCO, it was accepted that everyone has an equal right to participate in the communication process personally and that

has right to avoid illicit influences, misuse of communication, applying illicitly. With the establishment of Sean Macbride Commission in the later part of 70s, which was established to study global communication issues, these arguments gained a new meaning. Macbride Commission report on “Many voices; one world: communication society today and tomorrow” which was composed based on the information collected from different specialists, has identified the right to communication as a personal and a social right (Weerasinghe, 2013). Thus, the freedom of information and communication is globally accepted as a fundamental human right.

In Sri Lanka, this discussion came into public sphere largely after 2010. Thus, 2016 No. 12 Right to Information Act was passed in Sri Lanka and it was effective from 03rd February 2017. As per the Act, its objective to be in force as follows;

“An Act to provide rules and regulations in relation to the right to information, to precisely inform the reasons to refuse access to information, to establish the Right to Information Commission, to appoint Information Officers, precisely point out the procedure to obtain information and to provide rules and regulations related to it and other related matters”.

(Right to Information Act, 2016 p.1)

Information related to governance is important to the general public. General Public has a right to question the behaviour of the rulers elected from the votes of the General Public and the service of the State Officials. Thus, Sri Lankans were given the legal right to access the information and to reveal many hidden facts. This enabled a vast space to media field to explore and investigate information and to reveal them to the general public. According to Jayasekera (2020), a problematic situation pertaining to the facts whether this space is successfully used and taken advantage of either by the general public or the media is that only a fewer people is aware about its value. This can be confirmed by statistically analysing the thousands of requests forwarded to different institutions during the past few years. Even though it is qualitative the results are not satisfactory. Thus, media and civil society

organizations have a heavy responsibility to make the civil society aware about the right to information and to provide examples of how to use it meaningfully.

Thus, it has been accepted globally as well as in Sri Lanka as State, as a main element of the existence of general public in a state. Therefore, concealing information from the civilians of the State, distorting information and disabling the general public to access the information is considered opposing the State. Therefore, in order to create a perfect society and to lead the society, a timely requirement has arisen media activists to always act upon information and to act based on information for the betterment of the State.

Contemporary Media Shaping, Human Actions in a Society full of Information and the Need for a Media Policy

In the modern global society, the value for the money is slowly declining and information has become the most powerful weapon to endorse the global dominance. Therefore, the countries around the world are engaged in an “information warfare” in order to acquire information. Hence, the warfare that was fought using the weapons has now turned into a “no-weapon” information war. From a failing state to an emerging state, “information” has become the most powerful fact that affects every other factor. Also, the Company Owners who reign the information market, excels in the top of the world’s most powerful people lists.

“ In the global society, the key wealth is not the assets or industries but information. But information, at any time, cannot be considered as an asset. The major problem the human is facing today is not about how to gain more information but how to get rid of this high-information pandemic”.¹

(Weerasinghe, 2002)

Weerainghe, (2013), states that when generally speaking, local media does not follow a participative approach which allows the civilians to take part in a democratic process due to the market competition and acting according political agendas (P.16). Therefore, in most of

¹ Information warfare is defined as a modern warfare which uses information strategically to defeat the enemies.

the time, socializing false and baseless information and distorted information has seen an increase. With the high use of social media, it could be seen that this situation is socializing without a control and it is observed that this happens in networking. Weerasinghe (2015), citing Manuel Castells (1942), states that “through the concept of network society, dispersed networks that were created based on global information communication, have modified all the accessories that dominates the current social procedure such as production, consumption, power, culture and experience”. This continuous development in communication technology has transformed the modern global human society to a global super society by entering into a global transformation. This new situation has gradually developed the impact that the virtual community politically and socially. Castells concludes that these virtual communities will create virtual states in the near future (Dissanayake, 2021). Therefore, how will a state’s existence and policies be? It will create a problematic situation.

For example, Arab Spring and Student protests in Bangladesh can be taken. It is observed that due to these networks created by individual societies, these countries have been pushed further into depression and anarchy. An individual person who lives in this network society is not aware about the invisible hand behind controlling human and creating issues in this manner to achieve political advantages and other benefits. They become just one link in that network. Sometimes the individual might lose his life due to being instigate against the government and becoming ferocious.

“The world that media can give for an individual will become a part of his life and it will automatically make him get rid of his immediate social experiences. What will be the result of this? An individual becoming under the control of strong standards and misunderstandings”. (Athugala, 2016, P.21)

Weerasinghe (2012) states that the most powerful factor that shapes the contemporary individual for this situation is the media and market. Liberal Market has created a Consumer Human. Hence, this has omitted “I” in an individual and he has begun to live according to

“another”. Acts as “another” in media and in market. Thus, media has become a most powerful factor for the thought, living and existence of an individual and has created a future for the human. As pointed out by Hinman & Chomsky (1998), media creates unfair governance and market policies and discriminate the marginalized and general public through political debates (Weerasinghe, 2013, P.16).

“The traditional idea that the media act as a tool that collects, spreads and transmit information, has been challenged in the modern world and in present media excels their dominance in information production, controlling the information process and act as an accessory that decisively interferes into the entire statehood-socialization and has become an inseparable component of this process (Dayarathne, 2014, P.15).

This new social situation has gone far as society becoming mediatisation and going beyond that has developed up to citizen journalism. The Creator and the Receiver of media is the individual. Hence, this has created an uncontrollable information world. One factor should be pointed out here is that the designing of social media platforms such as Facebook is justified as a media platform to maintain social connections among the people. But is it the only thing? The answer for this is “No”. Hence, the emergence of all such media is purely based on commercial purposes (Dissanayake 2021). It can be seen that effective communication has been misused extremely for these commercial objectives. What influences this is the fact that media information distribution is not done without a proper standard or a policy but purely for commercial benefits.

This further reiterates the impact media has caused the daily life of the Sri Lankan citizen. Thus, it has become pivotal to confirm the resources of the information and to publish or transmit ethically and morally since by this time due to the lack of a proper regulation, media socialize misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (Canadian Centre for Security, 2024). By today, the receiver has no trust towards the information transmitted by the media (Wierzbicki, 2018). This can be further reiterated from the fact that Artificial Intelligence is being used to design and create media content. Hence, a post true ear has emerged where the

use get lost in the truth. This means that an individual has become to a level where he accepts the reality created by media without double checking it. This is a threat to a developing society. Therefore, timely need has arisen Sri Lanka to act against these media that spread these types of information based on one policy.

Marshall McLuhan's (1911-1980) famous saying of "Medium is the Message" depicts the impact media can cause on an individual and public opinion in a society. Thus, the message given by media is based on their own personal and political agendas, partiality and other benefits. Media is also powerful as well as the message. Hence, all media control the public opinion in a society.

Also, censoring or regulating media unnecessarily for political agendas and controlling media for such purposes, incur another threat to the citizens' right to information, democracy and media freedom. As pointed out by Samarakoon (2025), in China, Chinese Communist Party try to suppress the journalists gravely under "publishing false information" and "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". China has been identified as the leading country to imprison the journalists and according to Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), most of the journalists who were imprisoned in the year of 2024, were held under the allegations of "false information" or "anti-government". Not only that, China is the only country to imprison a large number of journalists in the world. According to the census report done by Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), for the year 2024, by 01st December 2024, the total number of journalists being held was at 50 and that was the highest number in the world for a country to imprison journalists.

A similar situation should not occur in Sri Lanka. Therefore, a timely requirement has arisen to implement a National Policy that is favourable for the journalists, citizens and the state mechanism.

Proposed Sri Lanka's National Media Policy and its Practicality

The mission of the proposed Sri Lanka's National Media Policy is improve the professionalism of media organizations, journalists and other media content designers and

by creating an optimal environment to act for the public interest in a secured and responsible framework.

According to the World Press Freedom Index composed by Reporters Without Borders for the year 2025, Sri Lanka stands at 139 place among 180 countries. In 2024, Sri Lanka was at 150 place (RSF, 2025). Even though compared to 2024, a positive situation is shown in 2025, the media freedom is still at a critical situation. The proposed National Media Policy should further bring this towards a positive zone. In order for media not to be used arbitrary and to become people's friendly and to become one of the leading points in human and national development and also in order to achieve the afore mentioned mission, it is important to make people and journalists aware about this and to make them participate in this process.

One of the main duties of media is accepted as continuous examination (Watch Dog/Guard Dog). It means being continuously attentive about the society and to report information. Hence, media is attentive about social, economic, political, and environmental all other fields and report any changes or the information public should be aware about. These information might not be easily accessible to the general public. Might be the information hidden from the society. Media's utmost duty is to duly investigate such information, to confirm the accuracy and to present them to the general public. However, this concept has undergone a vast change by now. Award –winning Professor Ariyaratne Athugala states that the media has gone from continuous examination (Watch Dog) to a “biting dog”. Thus, a media usage that pushes the individuals and the society towards degradation can be witnessed. The general public has also lost their trust in media. Therefore, it is important to draft the content of the media policy for a supervised and ethical media usage which develops the society.

Hence, in the proposed draft for the National Media Policy, numerous Policy Principles related to the importance of investigation, media responsibility and trustworthy, are being pointed out.

- No. 02 Policy Principle: “Mass Media performs a critical duty by providing trustworthy information which allows the citizens to actively engage in an independent and open society and promoting a healthy civil sector by acting as an Independent Watchdog”.
- No. 07 Policy Principle: It is important to follow media ethics for the accountability of media institutions and for the social responsibility and it is necessary to have a institutional mechanism to address issues pertaining to harmful media usage”.
- No. 13 Policy Principle: Strengthening public trust towards the media is important for the future existence of media. Ethical newspaper journalism, accountable media institutions and journalists with high level of professionalism are important for this.
- No. 16 Policy Principle: To certify a fair, well-aware and responsible media environment, it is important defend the rights of media receivers. (Ministry of Mass Media, n.d., P.7-9)

Further, the existing political mechanism should not interfere in breaching the supervision process in media. Assassinating and making them disappear (M.Nimalarajan, Prageeth Eknaligoda, Lasantha Wickramatunga, Dharmaratnam Sivaram...), assaulting and kidnapping (Keith Noyahr, Poddala Jayantha, Upali Thennakoon...), arresting (Bimal Ruhunage, G.P.Nishshanka, Tharindu Uduwaragedara..), censoring (Budunge Rasthiyaduwa, Flying Fish movie....), attacking media institutions and setting fire (Sirsa Studios, Lanka E News, Udayan Newspaper Office...), are examples for some of the criminal activities carried out against media for criticising the governments in office.

“Edmund Burke (1729-1797), identified press as the Fourth Estate of the State. Media has a social responsibility to point out situations where all three Legislature, Executive and Judiciary misuses the power and to act against such situations for the interest of the general public. That is why press/media was identified as the Fourth Estate of the State. However, most of the rulers are reluctant to accept this duty and responsibility of media. They only

welcome compliments not the criticisms. The rulers who are well aware about the unlimited power mass media holds, try to curb it using their power as soon as they realize that media has started acting against them”. (Jayasekera, 2009, P.02)

From the time period between 1981 to 2009, a number of 116 media activists, media workers, artists and cultural performers have been assassinated. Further, between 2010-2014, around 40 journalists or media workers either had been assassinated or made disappeared (Free Media Movement, 2021). It is a pathetic situation to hear about such incidents in a country where its name goes as Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is a timely requirement to implement a principles convention in National Media Policy which curb such situations.

When inquiring about how far they concern is based on to address these issues within the proposed National Media Policy draft, few policy principles have been depicted as theoretical principles about media freedom.

- Policy Principle No. 01: Freedom of Speech and Expression means every citizen’s right and it includes freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of media, right to answer, the right to access communicative media, the right to information and right to held contradictory views.
- Policy Principle No. 03: One of the most obligatory condition required for the journalists and press rooms to act without the political and commercial influences is the editorial independence. This will enable journalism that prioritise public well-fare and media ethics.
- Policy Principle No. 04: Media Pluralism² is essential for a positive democracy which will enable more balanced and fair public discussion disabling dominance of one single structure or single opinion in media contents.²

² As Doyle (2002, P.2-3), medial pluralism means the diversity of journalists. To stand up for different and independent voices, to represent different political ideologies, to represent different cultures

- Policy Principle No. 05: If journalists have to undergo threats such as harassment, imprisonment, acts of violence, assassination for their contribution towards public well-being, they must be physically, legally and institutionally safeguarded.
- Policy Principle No. 08: Media Freedom will be further certified through a regulation that will be enforced through the Parliament but not under the direct administration of a government but through a Co-regulatory Mechanism that binds all the multi parties in media field (state, private sector, civil society, media professionals and academia). (Ministry of Mass Media, n.d., P.7-9)

In order for the afore mentioned policies to be enforced rather than being just policies and to achieve expected specified objectives, it is important that the attention given in this regard to be more intense. This Media Policy suggests a third procedure identified as Co-Regulation instead of the two extreme ends of State Regulation over media and Self-Regulation imposed by media identifying its threats and weaknesses. Co-Regulation is a combination of State Regulation and Self-Regulation. It is regulatory procedure based on more participation, enforced by law of the country, but administered under a multilateral control body instead of a state body. Thus, this will enable to minimize the influential regulation in all media. It is important to take such constructive measures that will not limit the citizen's right to information. However, it is still important not to allow partial and unfair regulations to incur in future as well. Further, if this policy to be enforced and media to be regulated in some manner, it is important to socialize a scientific foundation and a logical foundation since people still have the right to information. This will enable general public and media in the country for a flawless media usage and will enable trustworthy absorption of the information transmitted.

Paying special attention to the literacy of the civilians and media professionalism in the proposed Media Policy in order to create a media art that is investigative and accountable for the general public can be identified as one such timely important constructive factor. Thus,

should be allowed. (pluralism in media ownership, pluralism in media institutions, pluralism in media productions)

in No.17 Policy Principle in the Policy draft it states that “ In order to critically consume media content and to design user generated content responsibly, the present life skills required by the citizens are media and information literacy (inclusive of digital literacy)”, (Ministry of Mass Media, n.d., P.9). Therefore, a timely requirement has arisen that the social individual be equipped with a media literacy to identify false, misleading or political based content and to identify content created via Artificial Intelligence. As per No. 18 Policy Principle in the proposed Policy draft, “ Media education and training is more important to increase the media professionalism and education and training must reformed and updated according to modern media realities”. And in No. 20 Policy Principle, it says that “With the use of new trends in Artificial Intelligence in the media field, new ethical challenges are being unwrapped and such should be carefully handled and shall provide timely and practical reactions such challenges”,(Ministry of Mass Media, n.d., P.9).

It is a positive factor that policy attention has been given towards Artificial Intelligence and digital media technology. The main reason is that the digital literacy and computer literacy in Sri Lanka stands at a very low level. According to the Population and Census statistics taken for year 2024, the computer literacy³ is at a low level of 35.9%. Also, digital literacy⁴ stands at a level of 65% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2024). Even in such a situation, the use of social media in Sri Lanka and digital space can be seen rapidly increasing by year 2025. According to Dataportal (2025), in a survey conducted under “Digital 2025: Sri Lanka”, by January 2025, the total population in Sri Lanka was 23.2 Million and from that 8.20 Million meaning 35.4% from the total population uses social media platforms. In 2020, the total social media subscribers were around 6.40 Million and that represented 30% of the total population. Thus, when comparing social media usage with 2020, it can be seen that the social media usage is rapidly increasing daily. Hence, within a short period of five years, the social media subscribers amount has increased by 2 Million.

³ Computer Literacy means the capability maintain a preliminary understanding on how to use computers and how they are functioned.

⁴ Digital Literacy means the capability to use a computer, laptop, tablet or a smart phone in his own.

Therefore, it is observed that in order to certify the right to information it is important that the citizens be given digital literacy. Hence, in the Policy Statements included in 06 Part of the Draft, T and W polices have been given more attention to this.

T. Promoting Media and Information Literacy inclusive of Digital Literacy: Media and Information Literacy means equipping citizens with skills and talents to act productively and responsibly with media and information networks. This enables people to critically think about the information received via traditional media or via online accessories and other media content. This will enable them to become efficient and critical citizens who can participate in civil life and democracy. The increase of internet use and digital accessories does not increase the information literacy. For that, the state, civil society and scholars should identify the requirements and must try to build skills in every age category in the society.

W. Getting Benefits from Artificial Intelligence and related technology: Media field is becoming impacted by Artificial Intelligence in different ways. Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being used to create, process and distribute media content. Automatic algorithm can recommend online content based on each subscriber's preference. This enhances the subscriber experience and connection. Already, some of the media institutions used AI. This paves way for a rapid and efficient news journalism. In generating income through targeted advertisements, AI plays a vital role. However, concern has been arisen about the harmful impacts towards the traditional news journalism which can be created through partial algorithm, false information and spreading hate speech through AI generated contents. When AI to be used continuously, its impact on mass media will be intense. An ethical guidance about AI usage should be implemented in order to certify responsible and impartial media usage. (Ministry of Mass Media, n.d., P.14-15)

By paying attention to these time requirements in the Media Policy and maintaining essential social communication, will further certify the right to information. Also, this enables the individual to identify false and misleading information published by media.

In Principle C in the National Media Policy, journalism has been identified as a common public interest. It has pointed out free, pluralistic and independent journalism means using information as a public good through trustworthy news and balanced criticisms. Hence, this National Media Policy has given a considerable value and special intervention in relation to the general public's right to information.

Thus, it is being state that this National Media Policy to be enforced for e period of 10 years from 2025 – 2034. It will be evaluated tri-annually in order to implement timely and suitable updates. It can be considered as a constructive point when considering the daily and rapidly changing technological development in media field. It is more suitable to use this National Media Policy to create a better media culture, more suitable for Sri Lanka and which does not restrict the general public's right to information.

Conclusion

There was a dire need for a National Media Policy for a long time which can rebuild the inter connections that were terminated among general Public, media and political mechanism in Sri Lanka. With the development of modern technologies, the traditional media monopoly has already been challenged and falling down where a citizen mediatisation is in the surface with the emerging of social media and digital technologies. Therefore, an individual lives in a high informative environment. This has made people to get lost in information not being able to figure out between true and false information. In such a time, not having a National Media Policy pushes a society towards downfall. Considering the timely requirement, based on many arguments and discussions, finally a National Media Policy has been drafted. But it has not been enforced. Hence, it should be enforced immediately after addressing further issues related to this and certifying the practicality by further research.

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Environment and Human Rights: Environmental Destruction as a human rights' challenge (In relation to Wilpattu Forest Massacre)

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Introduction

Every person who is eligible for the citizenship in a state is entitled for human rights. Hence, a citizen is enabled to enjoy numerous rights inclusive of the right to life which is the foremost right of all but humans as well as animals has to face life threatening challenges due to the environmental destruction. This study aims to investigate how fundamental human rights have been challenged due to the environmental destruction paying primary attention to the Wilpattu Forest Massacre. This study has conducted a thorough investigation how Wilpattu forest massacre had been carried out by violating and breaching the acts, rules and regulations especially paying attention to the Wilpattu Court Case which has challenged the right to life, right to fulfil one's privacy, right to have a family life, and man's right for a proper health and development researching through court cases from 2010-2013 and based on forest conservation acts and other policies and regulations. Due to the environmental destruction man's right to life, right to fulfil one's privacy, right to have a family life, and man's right for a proper health and development has been undeniably challenged and it has further become difficult to achieve a sustainable development due to the weaknesses, loopholes and gaps identified in the forest conservation acts, regulations and policies. In here, gaps in Wilpattu Forest Destruction, environmental fairness and human rights fundamental and national policies were taken into one framework before analysing based on environmental and legal point of view. Similarly, this study contributes meaningfully to both the discussions of human rights study and environmental policies.

Introduction

Each and every human born is entitled to human rights from the birth. Those are universal and unchallenged. Human rights can be defined as fundamental rights human needs to lead a natural live life (Sri Lankan Law and Human Rights, Charuka Samarasekera, AAL). Human rights are defined as rights that were gifted purely for the reason of being a human and those can be civil, political, cultural and economic and those depend on the dignity of the human (Dictionary, Colombian University). Human rights are duties (Mahatma Gandhi). Every human born is entitled to the citizenship in any particular state he was born in and such countries' constitution has enabled fundamental human rights to every citizen of such particular state. Therefore, humans enjoy different human rights based on each and every state. A universal fact is that all constitutions has identified the importance of fundamental human rights. Fundamental rights are considered the conscience and the soul of the constitution (Fundamental Right, Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission).

For the prosperity and pride of Sri Lankan citizens, fundamental rights of freedom, equality and justice and independence of the judiciary has been certified by the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. You and I who are born as humans are entitled to numerous rights since birth. Those rights are defined as human rights and a few special rights from them have been included in the supremely constitution. In the 1978 Constitution which is inforce within the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, in Paragraph 3 under Constitutions of 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 these fundamental rights have been identified and further certified (Isma, lawfacrotaract).

An environmental destruction can be defined as any detrimental impacts or destruction incurred to environmental systems, animals, earth, water or air caused either by human activity or natural reasons. Due to these destructions, bio diversity and abiotic environment both have been hugely challenged. Environmental destruction means gradual deterioration and degradation caused to natural environmental systems, soil, water and bio diversity due to anthropological pressures (Sing, 2022, Environmental Degradation: Challenges and Strategies for Mitigation).

The relationship between human rights and environment is indivisible and environmental rights confirm comfortable environment for a human to fulfil his own life situations without any difficulties. For the betterment of people, the government shall protect environment while securing it and improving it. And it is the responsibility and duty of each and every Sri Lankan to protect natural environment and natural resources (1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka). Further, human rights and environmental share an instinct relationship. Hence, a man's right to life, right to fulfil one's privacy, right to have a family life, and man's right for a proper health and development is purely based on the protection of environment and the environment is the resource generator for every person. The relationship between the human and the environment is a dynamic interaction that depends on natural resources for a human social existence and development. Also, human activities affects the natural environmental systems that sustains life (Adapted from Moran, Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology, 2018).

Based on this context, in order to analyse this indivisible relationship, a case study has been conducted about Wilpattu Forest Massacre during the period of 2010-2013. This case study practically investigates how environments destruction has challenged human rights based on Wilpattu Court Case, Sri Lankan environmental laws.

Theoretical framework

In social sciences usually knowledge is generated within theoretical paradigms. This proposed research is not just a study that collects, categorize and process data and information. It is an interpretative exercise. Such interpretation parameters and competencies are decided by the theories that are being used hereby. This research using Wilpattu Forest Massacre as a case study has studied how environmental destruction can challenge human rights. A detailed and descriptive theoretical literature based on interconnected theories of Environmental Justice Theory and Human Rights Approach on how Wilpattu environmental destruction has incurred consequences on social, environmental and rights is included hereby.

Environmental Justice Theory means a logical framework that brings out arguments that all men and living beings has a right to live in a clean and healthy environment, equal access to environmental benefits and to live a secured life free from environmental destruction. This reiterates the fact that environmental destruction such as pollution caused after industrialization, vastly affects low income people and marginalized groups. During old European Ear, even though concern was based on environmental ethics, resources conservation and health of the population in the current scenario more attention is given to climate changes and border pollution (Kuh, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Schlosberg, 2007; Vila and others, 2020). This is a concept that goes beyond environmentalism. It is not only protecting environment for one's own betterment but also identifying environmental quality and social equality. It emphasises identifying the problem through this and looking for solutions actively. Also, it puts an effort into rebuilding affected communities. For an example when considering about an urban green spaces cities and an industrialized area, in an urban green spaces cities where rich lives on all the parks and streets are well maintained with trees, flowers etc., and is full of green spaces. When considering an industrialized area, where mostly the low-income people live in, those are closer to the main roads with higher level of air pollution (Sustainability Directory, 2025).

In the context of Wilpattu Forest Massacre, how local communities who depend on forest resources were affected due to large scale deforestation and unauthorized constructions and how principles of land, development conservation had been ignored and disregarded how the rights related to livelihood, income, cultural and environmental security had been violated were largely discussed in this study.

Through Human Rights Approach, a legal framework is provided to evaluate a government's responsibility and obligation to protect humans and all living beings from environmental destructions. Through this approach it is emphasised that a government has a duty to protect and respect human rights based on principles such as participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency (UNDP, 2006). When environmental destruction threatens

to the right to life, right to health, right to use clean water resources, and right to livelihood and for a healthy environment, it becomes a human rights issue.

Human rights are universal and each human must have a freedom to live a free and an honourable life, to become socially and economically prosperous, and to participate in common activities and sustainable development objectives should be based on human rights. Further, through Human Rights approach, global challenges such as gender inequalities, climate changes, violations of children's rights, protecting peace, environmental degradation are being addressed (European Commission, 2023).

Hence, through these two theories, it depicts that environmental destruction is not just an environmental issue but it portrays diverse social issues such as social inequality, administration failures and human rights violations and through this theoretical combination the case study of Wilpattu Forest Destruction has been strengthened.

Methodology

This study is purely based on the secondary data and based on academic publications on environment and human rights, environmental protection laws and principles, and reports issued by international organizations such as UNDEP, UNEP, and Amnesty International. These data has been analysed using qualitative methodology while identifying legal gaps in environmental destruction, human rights, environmental justice and environmental principles.

Case Study

Wilpattu can be identified as the oldest National Park in Sri Lanka and it is situated in the north western low land dry zone in Sri Lanka. This is situated about 1.5 Meters above from sea level and bounded by Malwatu Oya and Modaragam Aru in North, by Kala Oya in South, by a plain ground with small mountains and a beach in West, by Hunuwila Village, Wilachchiya and Thanthirimale Villages in East.

This national park is enriched with high level of biodiversity and in a survey conducted in 2006, 284 animal species belonging to 101 categories and 21 species among them are indigenous and 30 endangered species have been identified.

During the Wilpattu Forest Massacre, an enclosed forest reservation situated alongside the Main Road from Wilpattu National Park towards Mannar which is referred to as “Kalaru Forest” or “ Marichchukkaddei Karidikkuli” had been illegally cleared from 2010-2013 and illegal human settlements were established and in 2013 with the intervention of Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, this process turned into a legal process. Further, during the time when Wilpattu was under the administration of Sri Lanka Army, two roads had been constructed through the National Park. One road from the West coast and the other from the Eastern coast goes towards Wilpattu National Park. The road from the Eastern coast which is around 35 kilometres long was opened to public on 26 – 01 – 2010 and it was portrayed in media as the reopening of Puttalam – Mannar Main Road. However, when analysing aerial photographs and the maps issued by Sri Lanka Survey Department back in 1924, nothing suggests the existence of such a main road or a road inside Wilpattu National Park. However, due to this illegal construction that was carried out alongside the Eastern coast, around 300 Acres of “Villu” environment or shallow lakes inside Wilpattu Park had been completely destroyed.

This environmental degradation has caused strong challenges in to the fundamental human rights and the humans’ right to life, right to clean water, right to proper health, right to livelihood, right to clean environment and rights related to indigenous people have been largely affected.

Discussion

During Wilpattu settlements and road constructions, around 2500 acres of forest land belonging to Forest Conservation Department had been destroyed by violating most of the effective Acts related to Forest Conservation in Sri Lanka. Due to this, the fundamental rights of the Sri Lankan citizens who were living near Wilpattu Park has been violated. In general,

human rights were automatically challenged when life, health, water, food, livelihood, culture, right to indigenous lands, and protected environment were violated during the forest destruction.

Reiterating the importance of the re-settlement of Muslim community who were displaced during the war, by clearing Kalaru Forest, land allocation was done under the letter issued by the Director to the President Task Force for the Re-settlement, Development and Security bearing No.PTF/NP/1 dated on 22 – 11 – 2012. Thus, on a decision taken by Mr.Rishad Bathuideen, then Minister of Industries and Commerce Affairs, it was decided to clear and release 250 meters of a forest line alongside Marichchukatti Salwathura Road, between 23rd and 29th Mile Posts and to use the said land for the re-settlement process. However, in the letter issued by Mr. K.P.Ariyadasa, former General of Forest Conservation, addressing the District Registrar of Manner, bearing No. EMDL/04/0208/11/2012 dated 14 – 02 – 2013, states to use a land allocation of 1800 Acres for the re-settlement process. However, this illegal deforestation had initially begin in 2010. By 2012, a large are of the said forest had already been cleared and turned into wastelands. It was 2500 Acres in extent. By that time, this land was controlled by Section 20 in the Forest Conservation Act. “All acts of clearing/deforesting forests, constructing roads, constructing permanent or temporary settlements and settling down, establishing cultivations, cutting down trees in crown lands are illegal”. Wilpattu Froest Massacre was carried out by violating this Act and still no authorized person nor any officials or any institution has taken any actions against this. Environmental degradation that is caused by clearing the forest ranges for commercial and development objectives, has violated air quality, water circle, stability in soil and climate regulations which incur negative impacts on the health of the affected communities.

Further, sub section 9 a(1) of Fauna and Flora (Amendment) Act No. 22 of 2009, says that “ In a crown land or in a private land within the limit of one mile from the National Park, no such development works can be done without the written consent of Director General of Wildlife. in such situations if the Director General of Wildlife recommends to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment Report, the report that was compiled should be open for

public opinion for a period of 30 days and Wildlife Advisory Committee opinions for a period of 60 days”. But, this Act had also been violated and fundamental human rights for a clean, secured and sustainable environment that was defined in the Constitution had been violated due to the environmental destruction.

In the Gazette Notification published Bearing No.772/22 dated 24th June 1993 according to National Environment (Amendment) Act, No. 47 of 1987, it says “Before clearing forest land more than an extent of One Hectare for non-forest purposes and implementing any re-settlement projects of settling 100 families at once, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report should be done and written consent should be obtained for such”. However, no such written consent was obtained in this regard and by clearing a large forest area and constructing settlements, has threatened to the human life. Due to the large scale deforestation, the human-Elephant conflict has increased by challenging the foremost fundamental human right of right to life. Due to the deforestation and clearing forest reserves from 1990-2000, which destroyed the natural habitats of Elephants, caused around 150 deaths of Elephants as a result. And the human deaths by Elephant assaults were at the limit of 40 per year. However, by 2013, these numbers began to increase where around 280 Elephant deaths were reported annually and human deaths were around 80. This can be portrayed as one of the large scale human rights violations.

Apart from this, Wilpattu National Park has an archaeological value as well. Evidence that depicts the prehistoric settlements which belong to The Grate Stone Age had been found here and the Thmbapanni Coast where Prince Vijaya got down is also located in Wilpattu National Park. The evidence that prove where prehistoric human lived here such as pieces of stone weapons, and ancient agricultural evidence had been found alongside the water resources. It is against Archaeological Act to clear and deforest and construct settlements and roads inside Wilpattu National Park that has an immense archaeological value. As per the Gazette Notification bearing No. 1152/14, published on 04th October 200, under Archaeological Act, it says “ Before implementing a re-settlement project, an Archaeological Impact Assessment must be carried out and prior written consent should be obtained for

such developments”.But no such Archaeological Impact Assessment was conducted before clearing and deforesting Kalaru Forest and constructing settlements. Hence, it can be observed that this massacre was conducted by violating the Archaeological Act as well.

During this massacre many water resources were completely destroyed and that also destroyed archaeological evidence that exposed numerous cultural identities. Not only that, this destruction has impacted communities that depend on the forest and rural environment losing their traditional food, fuel and medicines. Thus, it can be discussed that through this forest massacre which was carried out violating so many acts and laws, had challenged the right to life and many other fundamental rights.

Conclusion

Analysis depicts that the environmental destruction, especially the forest destruction does not limit only to an environmental issue but challenged deeply to the human rights as well. Through this study which was based on the case study of Wilpattu Forest Massacre, it could be seen that clearing protective forests, illegal settlements and nonregulated land usage had caused damages to the bio diversity. Further, it is clear that the current and future generation’s fundamental rights to a healthy and protected environment have been violated. Also, this discussion also emphasises the fact that the general public’s right to information has also been violated. This discussion also portrays the gaps and loopholes in acts and principles related to civilian participation and environmental security. Protecting natural environment can be identified as protecting human rights. Thus, how the right to life, health, water, accommodation and cultural heritage and other human rights had been challenged due to this forest destruction can be clearly seen and the final conclusion is that as the human and the natural environment is inseparable environmental security cannot either be separated from human dignity. Therefore, when designing and planning environmental protection principles, fundamental human rights must also be combined in order to create a sustainable future.

Suggestions

- Strict Implementation of the existing environmental and forest conservation laws
- By combining civilians' fundamental rights and environmental principles, protecting principles of transparency, public participation and accountability in order to confirm the citizens' rights
- Designing new laws to replant the destroyed forest areas and composing policies to avoid long term environmental destruction
- By drawing exact boundary lines in forests inclusive of Wilpattu and avoid illegal settlements
- Conducting programmes on human and wildlife coexistence while conserving the indigenous people and residents that depend on forests and local communities

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Protecting Fundamental Rights in the Constitution in relation to Television News Reporting in Sri Lanka

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Improvement of human points of view related to communication gained somewhat awakening with the invention of Printing Machine by Gutenberg. By 17th century, the newspaper journalism also began. Then in the beginning of the 19th century, scientists capability to turn audio media in to electronic media, introduced the radio. With the introduction of the radio, people's right to information was made easier. By the beginning of the 20th century, television media with a combination of audio and video media was invented and it created a new point of view in relation to communication.

Television media is leading mass media in the current information based society. Due to its nature and constructive factors, television media has become popular among general public. Primarily, the technical process of the television media has become one factor for its popularity. This can be identified as a combination of media science and art.

Television is a powerful mass media that creates the soul and world of people. Television has the capability to make the whole world into one single village. In whatever the era, mass media leads in the main factors that increase the intellectual property of people. Television is a window through which modern world can be seen (Athugala,2005).

News can be identified as one of the leading programme genres in television. Since the human origin till modern era, with the gradual transformation of human history, a requirement has arisen to get to know information. It will be effective to history, present and future as well. Till the date where humans are alive, their thirst for information will not cease. Later on, information gathered around one complex system and it blocked people from getting daily information related to society. But the most important information related to economic, social and political fields were later on constructed as news. With the technical

development that occurred in first century and with the innovation of electronic mass media, journalists and specialists had to study about news that is linked to the requirement to know information.

“News is attractive and true. This includes an update of new information related to an already known topic by the listener. Also, how the relevant information can impact the listener is identified as its attractiveness. What happens truly is that the relevant information is accurate as facts” (Kumarapeli, 2006).

The most important factor in a news is that it's new. Significance is also another factor. News content should be constructed under three elements of incident, idea and opinion. Especially people show a keen interest on news because their content can impact their lives differently. When considering the rapid development of global news, the reality behind them can be identified. Information presented to the subscriber through news, directly decides the subscriber's life requirement which nourishes their opinions and point of views. Thus, the subscribers are in a dire need of news.

Not all incidents that occur in the society is considered a news. In order for a specific incident to be a “news”, it should be novel, inclusive of a specific factor and has a recipient of the said report (Jagathchandra, 2013). When all these factors are fulfilled, then a particular incident is identified as a “news”. Otherwise it is just an information. If it is a news it should always be novel. Any out dated or old things are not considered a news and whatever mass media publishes should be important to the people. Also, an information does not become a news merely it's an information, but an information becomes a news when it is reported. In the process where mass media publishes a particular information as a news, it is compulsory to have a recipient to receive the said report. Hence, news doe not only publishes information. A behavioral change is expected from the recipient after receiving the said information as a news.

Further, it is important to have a news value in the information for it to be a news. Quantitative relation to the general public or the recipient decides the news value of a

particular incident. There is a high news value for things that impact the society, issues or things that happen around the person, or things related to famous people in the society or things against the general traditions. Thus, when deciding a news value, factors such as impact, proximity, timeliness, famous people or places, unusualness and conflicts are taken into consideration (Weerakoon, 2006).

By constantly paying attention to the above-mentioned points, it is possible to present more news items with competitive and more newsworthy value and create a more optimal news publishing lineup. In the modern world, news is simply the information that a journalist presents to the receiver through their media, out of the billions of events that occur every second in the world. No matter what the important event, it is important that it is a news story with a popular person or place that the media and the content of the news report are expected to take. And the value of news that is constantly seen diminishes. The unusualness of a news story must always be preserved. The profile of unusual or out-of-the-ordinary events will receive constant attention. Also, in today's media, conflict reporting is often used as a criterion for attracting subscribers. Through this, it adds value to a news story (Gunasekera, 2019).

The content of a news story can be described as a powerful factor that directly influences the consciousness of the receiver of the news. The essence of a news story is the truth. Further, the value of the news content is more strengthened by the news writer's characteristics, background and experiences, environment, professional background and experiences, institutional point of view, professional roles and ethics and the power bestowed upon the news writer within the institution. In such situations, the rights of the related people can be violated.

Rights are considered as an important condition in a democratic society. In most of the democratic countries in the world, rights has become an important topic. Rights are important for a person to live fulfilled life. Thus, rights can be defined as an important concept that allows a man to maintain a socialized life successfully. Hence, in today's world,

the international community has paid attention to rights. Rights existed even before the beginning of the society. Those rights were given to humans as they live in the society. Society has been created in order to protect these rights. These rights has a specified objective. Pattern required to complete man's privacy is created through this.

Rights are freedom or ownership's legal, social or moral principles. Thus, rights mean basic agreed rules which gives permission to people or about things to be paid to people based on legal system, social convention or moral theory. In the subjects of law and ethics, especially in the principles of justice, rights take an important place. Rights are most of time a fundamental item in the civilization and considered pillars that establish society and culture.

After the civil society was organized as an independent state, there was a need to protect from invasions, and to protect peace and law in states. To protect betterment of the society when taken personally, the individual and when taken as general, the society. The concept of rights emerged on this basis. Various scholars and philosophers have presented different definitions about rights.

Harrold J. Laski has pointed out that the rights is the condition that the human is required to maintain his social life in a better manner. J.C.Wylie says that reasonable requests made by civilians while fulfilling social responsibilities when living a social life. Further, Hobbes states that the social freedom we expect from others and others expect from us when living a social life is considered as rights (Perera, 2001).

Thus, the special factor that can be seen about rights is that it does not exist only to develop personal ego. One should enjoy his own rights while thinking about the personal and social betterment and improvement. In the modern world, rights is considered a pivotal concept. It is not only because of the concept but it is the most required condition for effective human existence. Every state in the world has realized the importance of the said conditions and has included a paragraph on rights into their Constitutions.

The concept of rights was rooted in the western civilization. Thus, Magna Carta Charter in 1215 was the first important declaration on human rights. To awaken law with regard to the

human rights during the 17th and 18th centuries, was paved by the ideologies and concepts presented by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau (Perera, 2001). In the first Constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka published in 1972, fundamental rights are being mentioned in the sub sections of Section 18 in 06th Chapter and in the second Constitution in the Republic published on 1978, fundamental rights are being included in the 03rd Chapter.

In Sri Lanka, the subject of fundamental rights came into the public sphere only after the independence. “However, after the independence, the Soulbury Constitution that was in force did not include any of the constitutional regulations in relation to the fundamental rights (Ariyasinghe, 2021)’. Instead of that regulations were implemented to protect the rights of the minorities. Thus, in order to interpret the constitution and to protect the regulations, an independent judiciary was established to protect rights and to prevent the government’s misuse of power. Apart from this numerous other regulations were included in the constitution and many accept that the political mechanism Soulbury government exercised was democratic human rights were further protected.

The official acceptance for the fundamental rights was given by the first Constitution in the Republic of Sri Lanka (Withanawasam, 2007). Thus, in the Section 18 (1) in the Constitution, fundamental rights are being included. However, this declaration of rights cannot be accepted as a full and complete one.

There is no such proper global and specific definition or interpretation into what actually is a constitution. There are a number of different and contradictory definitions and interpretation in relation to this. According to Aristotle, constitution is the document that depicts the formal nature of the relationship among the citizens of a specific state.

According to Dycie “ the document that includes all direct and indirect laws depicting the distribution of sovereign power of a state is considered as n Constitution” (Soysa, 2003, P.303).

Sir Ivor Jennings states that the document containing the basic principles in relation to the contents of the main organs of a government, legislature, executive and judiciary and their powers, how they are being implemented and the nature of the relationship among the citizens, is considered the constitution (Soysa, 2003).

In a constitution the basic elements take a legal nature. However, there are political elements that should be included in a constitution and such are decided based on the political vision of the state. The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was promulgated on 07th September 1978 by the National State Council. This is the second constitution of Sri Lanka which is a republic and it is the 3rd constitution promulgated under Sri Lanka after getting independence from British in 1948. It contains 172 Sections and 22 constitutional amendments. The constitutional expansion that commenced from the Colebrook – Cameron Constitution in 1883, has expanded till the 22nd amendment to the second Constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka which was promulgated in 1978. In every constitution declaration into fundamental rights is being included as a prominent factor and in the Constitution of Sri Lanka, a chapter about fundamental rights is included.

In the context of human rights, the fundamental rights granted to citizens can be seen as an important milestone in the history of this country. The fundamental rights are stated in Chapter 3, Sections 10 to 16 in the Second Constitution of the Republic. The rights mentioned in the Chapter 3 are of two types, the rights that can be enjoyed by all people and rights that can be enjoyed by citizens. Rights that are defined under Section 10,11 12 –(1), 12-(3) and 13 in the Constitution are the rights that are entitled to all citizens (Chapter 3 of the 1978 Constitution). The rights that can be enjoyed by the citizens are the rights mentioned in Chapter 3 of the 1978 Constitution under Section 12-(2), 14(2). Right to freedom of speech, assembly, association, employment and movement are stated in Section 14 and other important entitled rights are being mentioned below;

Freedom of speech and expression inclusive of the freedom of dialogue

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Freedom of the company

Freedom to either alone or in a community or in public or privately to manifest his religion, belief, to teach, practice and observe

Freedom to either alone or in community to enjoy and develop one's own culture and to use one's own language

Freedom to engage, alone or in association with others, in any lawful employment, profession, industry, trade or business

Freedom of movement and residence within Sri Lanka, and

The right to freedom of movement and entry into Sri Lanka (1978 Constitution, Chapter 3, P.6).

The media uses several basic theories in news reporting. One of the basic theories to use is the W5 H1 theory. What are "W5" and "H1"? They are "Who, What, When, Why, Where and How. Why is "W5" and "H1" is important? Journalists will argue that your story is not complete until you answer all six questions.

The TV news script is a very important element in television news reporting. At least three special meetings are held in any television channel to prepare the script suitable for the main news broadcast. In these meetings, a daily news briefing is conducted based on the daily reports of internal reporters, reports of regional reporters, certain reports extracted from the internet, reports obtained from foreign news agencies, etc. Members of the news team and News General Managers or News Directors take part in these meetings. The daily news briefing is being listed out during the meeting. The news is identified as "story". In this briefing, several factors that influence the priority of the news can be identified. Those are Media ownership, internal agendas of the institution, political preferences. Commercial objectives or business plans and cultural constraints and ethical considerations. News editing takes place subjected to these considerations and it is clear that it takes place according to the concept of "gatekeeping" in communication theory (Thangarajah, 2016).

In creating the content of a news, great care should be taken to ensure accuracy, clarity and balance. This creates credibility in the mind of the receiver. News broadcast that lack these characteristics can be perceived as distant and rejected by the receiver (Gunasekera, 2010). In order for someone who perceives certain idea or information, the presence of a specific context (content) and a specific format is a mandatory condition. The format and the content of a text are inextricably linked. The format of paying attention to the content of a news is the way in which the meaning of that idea is organized and presented in an organized manner.

In recent years, daily television news has become associated with sensitivity and in American society it has become popular as an “inside edition” and a “hard copy” (Wilson, 1998). Another unique feature of television news is that it can be reported first-hand. Usually, what we see on television the night before, we read in the newspaper the next day (Shirvastava, 2004). Electronic media is more emotional because it is visual. Therefore, electronic media can cause a strong shock. Television is a visual medium, which makes people react immediately (Samaranayake, 2004).

Television is an audio-visual medium, critics point out that television has a greater impact on the audience due to its audio-visual quality. The survival of television institutions is determined by the number of viewers watching their channel. Therefore, every television channel produces programmes to attract viewers. Each channel broadcasts a variety of programmes throughout the day, with the expectation of an increased viewership.

There are rights that cannot be limited by any law or by the action of any government official. These rights are called absolute rights or inviolable rights. Articles 10, 11, 13-3(3) and 13(4) of the Constitution are such absolute rights (Jayakumar, 2006). Restricted rights are rights other than 12, 13-(3) and 13(4) of the Constitution and certain imitations of Article 14 are provided under Article 15.

Also, a special feature of fundamental rights is that they can be enforced by the courts. Articles 17 and 126 of the Constitution have given the Supreme Court the sole and exclusive power to investigate and decide on violations of rights. Also, the Ombudsman established

under Article 156 of the Constitution, the Human Rights Commission established under the Human Rights Commission Act, No. 21 of 1996 and the Sri Lanka Police, the National Child Protection Authority, the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau, non-governmental organizations etc., are also important in this regard.

Although the citizen has many important rights related to the rights as stated above, it is also necessary to inquire about their protection at the practical level. In today's information-based society, especially the television media information reporting, the quality of a news story and the principles of news are not protected in the competitive reporting of news.

Sri Lankan television media faces challenges to fundamental rights in its news reporting. For example, the Seya Sadeewmini murder incident, the reporting in relation to the cremation of Muslims during the initial stages of the second wave of COVID-19 as well as reporting of the events surrounding the murder of Priyantha Diyawadana in Pakistan, can be used to point out violations of fundamental rights based on media ethics.

In particular, in the case of the murder of Seya Sadeewmini, the "presumption of innocence" i.e, Article 13 (5) of the Constitution was challenged. Not only that, the right to due process was also violated and at time there was reporting that was detrimental to the judicial process, similarly, in the reporting of (COVID), the infected have been marginalised in society by highlighting issues such as privacy. In the issues of COVID corpses, there was reporting that was detrimental to one community. In the initial reporting on the Priyantha Diyawadana murder, some of the reports revealed massive racial issue, it was further suppressed automatically due to the prevailing COVID situation. Therefore. There is a need to apply an ethical basis with greater care in protecting the fundamental rights of the Constitution, especially in Sri Lanka Television news reporting.

The murder of Seya Sadwmini and the related incidents, when taking into consideration about fundamental rights defined in the Constitution were challenged during the television news reporting, is considered the most shocking news that was ever telecasted in the Sri Lankan television media history. The kidnapping, rape and murder of five-year old Seya

Sadewmini, a resident of Badalgama, Akarangaha in Kotadeniya Police Division, can be considered one of the most controversial incidents in Sri Lanka. Various parties have been investigating these murders and all the incidents that followed. The media which is the main vehicle for communicating information to the public, was able to draw more attention to its role. On 11th September 2015, Seya Sadewmini was abducted and on 13th September her naked body was found near a canal in a paddy field, not far from her home. Without any doubt, this incident is a clear case of child abuse (Gunasekera, 2024).

The media, in particular reports, interprets and expresses opinions selected from information. The Sri Lankan television media reported, interpreted and expressed opinions on this incident. However, when reporting incidents such as child abuse, the television media, in particular, should be more careful than when reporting other incidents. This is because such reporting poses a serious challenge to the fundamental rights of both the parties involved in the incident and external parties. Although, the role played by television in realizing the right to information accordance with Article 14(1) (a) of Chapter 3 of the Constitution is at a very high level, its behaviour is not at all acceptable under some articles in the Constitution in relation to the protection of fundamental rights.

In the case of the murder of Seya Sadwmini, the personal details of the murdered girl were reported by media without any ethical considerations. Such reporting has caused damages to the deceased girl as well as on her family. According to Article 2 of the Constitution which is the Fundamental Rights Chapter (12), no citizen shall be subjected to any discrimination or special treatment on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any of these grounds. The article under the Fundamental Rights is being challenged through such reporting. As reported by the media, the end result of all this was that Seya's parents attended the funeral under Police protection. The pressure was so great that the society begun to label them as "murderers" as a result of irresponsible news reporting. But a similar incident occurred in India in 2012, when the gang rape of s student in Delhi attracted attention not only in the region but also around the world. At that time, the Indian media came to a common consensus not to publish any photos of the raped student,

but also not to publish reports of the gang rape. During the trial, the criminals were sentenced to death in a situation where not a single photos of the raped student was published.

Another incident is Seya Sademini murder was the news reporting on the suspects. The first suspects arrested were a father of two and a 17 year old schoolboy. Their personal information was made public by the media. The reporting of information without verifying its accuracy and the special value given to it led to public anger and social aggression. Based on this, a social aggression developed against them as referring to them as “rapists” and “murderers”. According to Article 5 of the Fundamental Rights Chapter (13) of the Constitution, every person shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty. It is seen in the study of this that the article has been challenged. Moreover, Article 2 of the Constitution (12) has also been challenged again. The media also reported all the personal details of a young student who was arrested on suspicion. The journalists had no idea how he would face society after being released if he was not found guilty.

Accordingly, the main issue that arises when looking at this chain of events is whether certain media outlets that reported on Seya’s murder adhered to the fundamental rights of the Constitution. It should be questioned that “How can a criminal matter that has not been confirmed as true by initial Police investigations be published as it is were true? What is the need and right to do so?” It is true that due to the revelations carried out through the media, there was increased interest in fining Seya’s killer and a social awakening about it. However, the social existence of three families was severely challenged by the television media news reporting of the relevant incident. In fact, if the media had not shown such an urgency, this situation would not have gained such a hype. Accordingly the relevant news reporting has violated the fundamental rights of the Constitution, Article 11, 12-(1), (2) and 13 (5) and 14(1) (g) (h). The lack of knowledge among citizens regarding the fundamental rights defined in the Constitution might be a reason for the low quality news reporting in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, in order to protect the fundamental rights of the Constitution in Sri Lankan television news reporting, the right to privacy, which is constantly challenged in news reporting, should be included as a fundamental right. Also, a common code of ethics is needed for Sri Lankan television media. Furthermore, private television channels in the country should be constitutionally obligated to protect fundamental right. Also, there is an urgent need for a legal system, to protect the fundamental rights of citizens who are challenged by the reporting carried out in news broadcasts, even by private media institutions.

Citizens should also be given at least a basic knowledge of the fundamental rights of the Constitution. In order to ensure the right to information, which is a fundamental right, the Sri Lankan media should incorporate news principles that take into account the quality of a news item and its content. Furthermore, a common consensus of journalists should be arranged to create a media ethics system that protects the fundamental rights of the Constitution and Journalists should always be given the understanding that they should engage in media activities while respecting the rights of the citizens while maintaining their professionalism.

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A study into effects of online sexual harassment in relation to the personal and professional lives of journalists in Sri Lanka

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Sexual violence in the workplace which has become a common social phenomenon in every country in the world as also being reported by media institutions which are now a driving force for social change. Online sexual harassment has also emerged as widespread threat to media workers working in media institutions in Sri Lanka affecting their professional stability and personal well-being. Therefore this research was conducted to determine the extent to which the situation has affected the media industry in Sri Lanka. This research was mainly based on the Gender Based Violence Theory (GBV). In it, a questionnaire was administered to 200 media workers working in media institutions in the country under the snowball sampling method based on the survey methodology and the data obtained analysed through SPSS software. The majority of respondents said that online harassment affects their personal lives (287) and professional progress. Of these 47.6% reported having experienced sexual social solicitations related to professional opportunities. Despite such serious incidents the majority refrain from reporting incident due to shame fear, of retaliation, lack of trust in the system and confidentiality issues. Therefore. There is a need

for a strong legal mechanism and digital protection mechanism in the media sector in Sri Lanka to ensure that media professionals can work in a safe respectful and fair professional environment.

Keywords: roadside violence, female journalists, sexual bribery, newsrooms, well-being

Introduction

Sexual violence has become a common social phenomenon in every country in the world. This cannot be defined as a new situation in society as it is a phenomenon that has existed since ancient times. “Globally, there is an increase in gender based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023.pl). In this regard a study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) shows that one and three women will face sexual or physical harassment violence in her lifetime (UNPFA 2013). Therefore, in the past few years many women have come forward with their concerns about workplace harassment through movement such as me too.

Women face gender base discrimination at home at work and in society in general, which leads to gross violations of fundamental rights and human rights. Women journalists working in media institutions also face such incidents and they face gender based discrimination and also suffer from violations of the right to freedom of expression in the course of their professional activities. In modern times, this sexual harassment occurs in both online and off-line forms. “Since this phenomenon is still a decade or two old concept that came with the rapid spread of digitalization and social media, it has been difficult to provide a specific terminological introduction for it. Therefore, the terms online abuse, online harassment, online violence, gendered online violence and online misogyny can be used to describe this phenomenon.

A media institution is a driving force in society. The professionalism of journalists plays an important role in protecting democracy and shaping public discourse. However, physical

verbal and psychological sexual abuse and discrimination have become a daily reality for women in the media.

Sexual harassment against journalists is an increasingly visible problem worldwide and it has intensified with the growth of digital communication and social media platforms. Today, journalists have to use social media such as the Internet, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter to find news, obtain data and information related to media content. In this context, among the latest threat facing women journalists in the digital field specially the threats from social media and websites have become increasingly prevalent. This ranges from dangerous, harmful, gender based online harassments to threats of sexual violence and outright targeted attacks. In modern times, digital security breach have also grown to include malicious misrepresentation using artificial intelligence technology (Posetti & Storm, 2019,P.76). As a result of these converging risks, journalists and media workers are facing a number of serious challenges in their profession. The Association for Progressive Communication (APC) has reported that women journalists as one of the groups that are frequently targeted for online violence. Research shows that the resulting fear of violence is leading women journalist to withdraw from their social media accounts and from the profession (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2016). The United Nations and other civil Society organizations have drawn attention to this issue researching its impact and calling for action and solutions. As a result, in September 2016 the UN Human Rights council unanimously adapted resolution 33/2 on the safety of journalists which condemns any violence against women journalists including sexual and gender based discrimination and violence intimidation and racial and ethnic harassment in the cause of their work and also action to address the gender specific threats faced by women journalists (Palm,2024. P.1 & United Nations 2016).

In the socio-cultural context of Sri Lanka, discussions of gender, sexuality and harassment are sensitive and stigmatized further complicating efforts to address these issues. according to Article 12 of the Constitution Sri Lanka “no citizen shall be subjected to any discrimination

or special treatment on the grounds of race religion language nationality sex political opinion or players of birth or any of these grounds” (Constitution Sri Lanka, Revised Edition 2015).

The media industry Sri Lanka has undergone a rapid digital transformation over the past decade. With the rise of the Internet, social media and digital technology and increasing reliance on digital platforms to find and distribute news, women journalists have become increasingly vulnerable to online abuse. A 2021 UNESCO report found that there is an increase in online violence against the women journalists. This trend is also evident in Sri Lanka and it further states that such attacks are often politically motivated (Paranamana, 2022, p.9). Such harassment can occur due to the main reasons of the anonymity and ease of access offered by digital platforms. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to explore the online sexual harassment faced by media women working in Sri Lanka newsrooms, despite such legal enforcement.

2.0. Literature Review

Sexual harassment is the act of an employer, supervisor, manager, or close associate influencing the hiring, promotion, training, discipline, termination, salary increase or other benefits of an existing staff member or job applicant in exchange for sexual favors. According to the International Labour Organization, “sexual harassment is any act that violates the dignity of women or men is unwanted, unacceptable, inappropriate and offensive to the recipient and create an intimidating hostile unstable or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment is not only sexual but also the exercise of power relations based on gender (Uggen et al). The sexual harassment can be divided into three parts of physical, verbal and non-verbal (psychological).

The right to freedom of employment is an alienable right of all human beings. It includes the legal right of men and women to equal treatment in the profession. It is a punishable offense in Sri Lanka under Section 345 of the Penal Code (amendment) Act No. 22 of 1995 and Article 12 of the Constitution of 1978. Without these pressures “journalists need safety, protection and freedom of expression to carry out their profession”. But globally women

journalists are being deprived of these. According to international feminist media analyst these factors place women professionals at additional risk and stresses (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023, P.3).

In addition to these off-line on-site issues online harassment and threats have also increased. Global research shows that the impact of online harassment can be very disappointing and frustrating for journalists. This has led to increased mental distress and the withdrawal of journalists from their media careers (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023, P.4). Not long ago journalism was and almost entirely male dominated profession. Since journalists were the exception women were discouraged from entering journalism. Today more and more women are working as journalists. In some countries, the majority of working journalists are women and while the number of women in the profession is increasing there is a long battle to ensure their values and voices are equally represented in the media. In the recent years women journalists have also faced discrimination based on gender and sexual harassment on online platforms. A large number of women journalists face threats of rape, murder, sexual harassment, stalking, hate speech, sexism and more. The International Women's Media Foundation (2018), found that 63% of women who responded have been abused at least once. Another survey conducted by the International Center for Journalist (ICFJ) and UNESCO in 2015 using 1200 media professionals worldwide found that 73% of women experience online abuse, harassment, threats and attacks (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023, P.3).

One in two media workers even in countries like the United States has experienced various forms of sexual harassment, emotional abuse, online nuisances and other forms of gender based violence during their careers (Ferrier and Garud-Patkar, 2018; Mendes et al., 2018). A study by the British think- tank demos which analysed millions of tweets found that women more likely to be abuse than men. Meanwhile, media workers have become dominant with media workers and television news presenters being abused at roughly three times the rate of their male counterparts (Bartlett, et al., 2014). Harassment and discrimination both inside and outside the workplace in both online and off-line settings have created an unfavorable work environment for women in journalism.

3.0. Research Methodology

The “case study methodology” was used as the main research methodology. Under this it investigates the online sexual harassment faced by female journalist working in the newsrooms of media institutions in Sri Lanka and the negative impact it has on them.

3.1. Data collection

A formal questionnaire was administered online to female journalists working in newsrooms in media institutions in the country using quantitative data collection methods. In the study the identity of the female journalists who participated in the sample was protected in accordance with research ethics.

3.2. Sample

In order to conduct a scientific research a scientific sampling method must be followed. In this study, the data collection was done based on the “snowball sampling” method. That is since it is not possible to include every member of the population (all the female journalists in Sri Lanka) in the sample a few female journalists who were personally known were given the opportunity to fill out this questionnaire by contacting them and contacting other female journalists. The reason for using the “snowball sampling” method for this research was that sexual harassment and gender power dynamics are sensitive issues. Therefore, this sampling method was used to increase the perceived legitimacy of the study. As many people are reluctant to participate in the research as a questionnaire related to data collection is directed by someone they trust. Accordingly, data was obtained from hundred female journalist working in media institutions in the country for this questionnaire.

3.3. Theory & Concepts

Gender- Based Violence theory recognizes that violence and harassment against women are rather than unequal gender based power structures that privilege men and restrict women to different groups based on their gender. GBV is understood not simply as individual acts of aggression but as a systematic and socially constructed phenomenon reinforced by

patriarchal norms, cultural expectations and institutional inequalities. It can be physical, psychological, economic or online. It is also used as a mechanism to control, silence or limit women's mobility, authority and participation in public and private spheres. Therefore, GBV theory refers to a broad social power imbalance rather than isolated incidents such as harassment. Women are at risk as digital spaces reproduce and amplify gender-based power dynamics that exist off-line, women can be targets of harassment, intimidation and sexualized attacks. This theory is essential for understanding contemporary forms of online abuse. Online sexual harassment targeting women journalists is a digital manifestation of gender-based violence. In the media sector in Sri Lanka women journalists are victims of sexualized online attacks such as threats. Insults. Therefore, the study analyses how online sexual harassment affects the professional roles and personal well-being of women journalists and highlights the need for institutional and policy-level responses.

4.0. Data Analysis

In this research, the data collected using the questionnaire method was analysed using SPSS 22 software. Accordingly, in the data analysis conducted according to the demographic factors in the sample 30% of the female journalists representing state-owned media institutions and 70% female journalists representing privately-owned media institutions and 88 out of the total sample, provided their services in Sinhala, nine in English and three in Tamil. The total sample included journalists with less than one year of experience to those with more than 20 years of experience.

Accordingly the results of the data analysis conducted on whether female journalists representing the entire population faced sexual harassment in their professional activities during the service period as shown in the table 4.1 below.

Whether you were sexually assaulted	The nature of media organization ownership		
	State ownership	Private ownership	The total sum
Sexually assaulted	20%	46%	66%
Not sexually assaulted	8%	21%	29%
Not aware of sexual assault	2%	3%	5%
The total sum	30%	70%	100%

Table 4.1:Field Survey (2025)

Accordingly, it was revealed that 66% of the total sample had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment in their professional capacity while 29% of the total sample had not been subjected to such harassment. Also nearly 5% responded that they were not aware of whether they had been subjected to such harassment. According to this data analysis the highest number of sexual harassment cases were reported by female journalists working in privately owned media institutions (46%).

The data analysis conducted according to the nature of the media institution is shown in the table 4.2.

The nature of the media institution	The nature of media organization ownership			Sexual harassment by the nature of the media	
	State ownership	Private ownership	The total sum		
Newspaper	26.2%	38.8%	60.0%	Print media	61.5%
Magazine	.0%	1.5%	1.5%	Electronic media	32.3%
Radio	4.6%	6.2%	10.8%	New media	6.2%
Television	1.5%	20.0%	21.5%	Total	100.0%
Web media	3.1%	3.1%	6.2%		
Total	35.4%	64.6%	100.0%		

Table 4.2:Field Survey (2025)

Accordingly of the reported incident 61.57% were reported through print media (newspapers and magazines), 32.3% through electronic media and 6.2% through new media (web media).

Of the incidents reported 71.17% were reported from the internal parties of media institutions and 18.4% were reported from external parties associated with media institutions.

Table 4.3 which includes an analysis of the data is shown below.

The party responsible for sexual harassment	Response percentage
From an internal party related to the media organization	71.1%
From an external party related to the media institution	18.4%
Not aware of such sexual assault	10.5%
Total	100.0%

Table 4.3:Field Survey (2025)

This data analysis also shows that there are 10.57% people who do not know whether they have been subjected to such sexual violence.

Furthermore, the data analysis conducted on the nature of sexual harassment against female journalists revealed that the majority of female journalists have been subjected to verbal sexual harassment. This is evident from the data analysis in table 4.4.

The nature of harassment	The nature of the media institution					Total
	Newspaper	Magazine	Radio	Television	Web media	
Physical sexual harassment	12.3%	6.8%	9.6%	16.4%	13.7%	21.9%
Verbal sexual harassment	52.1%	28.8%	32.9%	43.8%	41.1%	84.9%
psychological sexual harassment	31.5%	17.8%	26.0%	31.5%	28.8%	5.5%
Not aware of that whether subjected to such violence	2.7%	2.7%	.0%	2.7%	2.7%	5.5%
Total	60.3%	32.9%	38.4%	47.9%	46.6	100.0%

Table 4.4:Field Survey (2025)

Accordingly, 16.4% of the journalists working in television newsrooms from the total sample have experienced physical sexual harassment which is a high figure compared to other media. The second highest figure was obtained for journalist working in web media (13.77). Similarly, verbal sexual harassment has occurred mostly in the newspaper media with 52.17% of the total sample responding to this while 43.8% and 41.1% of the total sample responding to verbal sexual harassment in television and we meet respectively. 31.5% of the total sample responding to psychological sexual harassment in newspapers and television while 28.8% of the total sample responding to psychological sexual harassment in the media.

In the overall data analysis, it is revealed that 21.9% reported experiencing physical sexual harassment 84.9% reported experiencing verbal sexual harassment and 57.5% reported experiencing psychological sexual harassment.

Also the data analysis regarding the physical and sexual violence they have suffered is shown in the table 4.5 below.

The nature of physical sexual harassment	Respond percentage
Unwanted body touching	25.3%
Attempted sexual assault	6.1%
Forced hugging	19.2%
Forced kissing	11.1%
Other	26.3%
It is not known whether such violation violence has been committed	12.1%
Total	100.0%

Table 4.5:Field Survey (2025)

According to this data analysis the majority of female journalist in the sample, gets unnecessarily and unwanted body touching and 25.3% of the total sample responded that they were subjected to touching 19.2% responded that they were subjected to forced hugging, 11.12% responded that they were subjected to forced kissing and 6.1% of the total sample responded that they were subjected to four sexual intercourse.

Also according to the data analysis conducted on the nature of verbal sexual harassment it was revealed that 14.9% of the total sample had been made jokes related to sex. Also, 10.77% of the total sample had responded that They had questioned the personal sexual life and made various statements about the clothes of female journalists. It is also noteworthy that 13.1% of the total sample had responded that they had made obscene jokes.

Table 4.6 which contains detailed data on this is shown below.

The nature of verbal sexual harassment	Respond percentage
Sexual hints or suggestions	8.2%
Sexual suggestive comments or jokes	14.9%
Inappropriate questions about personal or sexual life	10.7%
Making obscene comments about physical appearance or body	11.0%

Commenting on your clothes	10.7%
Using obscene words	10.4%
Making obscene jokes	13.1%
Repeated unwanted flirting	8.2%
Making derogatory remarks related to gender or sexuality	6.4%
Other	2.7%
It is not known whether such violence has been committed	3.7%
Total	100.0%

Table 4.6:Field Survey (2025)

Also according to the data analysis conducted on the nature of the psychological sexual harassment, it is evident that the majority of female journalists are severely affected by the spread of sexual gossip, with 21.32% of the total sample responding.

The detailed data analysis in this regard is given in table 4.7.

Nature of the psychological sexual harassment	Respond percentage
talking to others about your body	18.9%
Talking taking photos videos without permission	6.3%
Sending sexual obscene photos to a phone via social media	9.4%
Intimidation or threats with a sexual text	6.3%
Humiliation or degradation based on gender or sexuality	13.4%
Spreading sexual rumours or gossip	21.3%
other	17.3%
It is not known whether such violence has been committed	7.1%
Total	100.0%

Table 4.7:Field Survey (2025)

This data analysis further shows that 18.9% of the respondents responded to unwanted comments about female journalists' bodies and 13.47% of the total sample responded to humiliating or belittling them based on gender or sexuality. it also appears that 9.4% of the total sample responded to sending obscene photos to their phones via social media the psychological sexual harassment is directly related to sexual violence committed via the Internet or social media.

The results of the data analysis conducted regarding the locations where are these sexual harassment incidents occur as shown in table 4.8.

places where sexual harassment occur	Respond percentage
After meeting at work (physically)	60.2%
Through social media (online)	39.8%
the total	100.0%

Table 4.8:Field Survey (2025)

Accordingly 39.8% of the total sample had been subjected to online sexual harassment and 60.2% had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment after meeting at the workplace that is after physically meeting

Table 4.9 shows the data analysis related to the media used for sexual harassment through social media (online).

Social media networks used to commit sexual harassment	Respond percentage
Facebook	50.0%
WhatsApp	43.3%
Other	6.7%
Total	100.0%

Table 4.9:Field Survey (2025)

According to this data analysis it was revealed that the majority of female journalists have been sexually harassed through Facebook with 50% of the total sample responding while 43.3% have been sexually harassed through WhatsApp.

In addition, another 6.7% had been sexually harassed through other social media and these other social media included short message services such as email or SMS as well as phone calls. Analysis of this data reviewed that the majority of media users had been sexually harassed through to edge social media networks of Facebook and WhatsApp.

Table 4.10 shows the data analysis of the responses of relevant women journalists regarding sexual harassment.

Responses of relevant women journalists regarding sexual harassment	Size	Percentage
Resisted those demands or questions	62	62.0%
There was no strength to resist those Demands or questions	13	13.0%
Number of none respondents	25	25.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Table 4.10:Field Survey (2025)

According to this data analysis it was revealed that while 62% out of the total sample a post such a request or influencers 13% out of the total sample did not have the strength to oppose them.

The data analysis conducted regarding whether any other part was informed about such a request or influence after it occurred is shown in table 4.11.

whether any other part was informed about such a request or influence after it occurred	Size	Percentage
Yes	48	48.0%
No	5	5.0%
For some extent	23	23.0%
Not responded	24	24.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Table 4.11:Field Survey (2025)

According to the analysis of data on whether they reported the sexual harassment they experienced or told anyone about it the majority of respondent 48% reported the incidents to some party while an additional 23% respondents reported sharing their experiences partially or informally to some extent. This reflects tendency towards partial disclosure other rather than formal reporting. Only 5% respondents did not responded to this question. This highlights the sensitivity in discussing about sexual harassments in newsrooms.

Analysis conducted on the reasons for not reporting is shown in table 4.12.

Reasons for not reporting sexual harassment	
Fear of retaliation or negative consequence consequences	3.7%
Previous and adverse consequences experienced for reporting	9.2%
Possible pressure from family members	1.8%
Shame	11.0%
Lack of trusting authorities	9.2%
Fear of confidentiality or privacy	16.5%
Thinking that professional reputation or career will be harmed	21.1%
Lack of awareness of how or where to report	3.7%
Pressure from others not to report	8.3%
Other	15.6%
The total	100.0%

The survey explored the reasons why participants refrain from reporting sexual harassment repeating a complex interplay of personal social and institutional factors. The majority of the overall sample said that reporting incidents to another party would damage their professional reputation or career advancement (21.7%). Concerns about confidentiality of privacy were also prominent with 16.57% of the participants responding. Other prominent factors included feelings of shame 11.07%, previous negative experiences with reporting mechanisms 9.27%, and lack of trusting reporting systems or relevant authorities. In addition 8.3% of the respondents reported pressure from others not to report with 3.7% sighting fear of retaliation or adverse consequences, 3.7% citing insufficient awareness of reporting procedures and 1.8% citing possible pressure from family. Collectively these findings suggest the structural deficiencies, institutional reporting mechanisms and socio-cultural pressures combined with stigma fear of professional repercussions and interpersonal influence are factors that may hinder women journalists from formally reporting sexual harassment.

5.0. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusions

the study revealed that online sexual harassment is a serious and widespread issue affecting female journalists in Sri Lanka. The research data shows that this harassment through all major forms, both verbal and psychological. but is most prevalent through digital communication channels especially social media platform such as Facebook and WhatsApp. This highlights the deep rooted gender power imbalances within media institutions.

The research findings further show that for many female journalists this harassment causes long-term emotional distress, loss of confidence, damage to their reputation and disruption to their personal lives. Professional setbacks, institutional dysfunction, lack of confidentiality and cultural fear of stigmatization have discouraged victims from reporting incidents, prevented them from seeking legal redress and normalized online sexual harassment.

Overall, this research concludes that online sexual harassment has become a digital safety issue and gender- based violence issue.

5.2. Proposals

- When drafting/updating binding documents such as the National Media Policy, the Editors Guild Policy Series and the Journalism Code of ethics necessary amendment should be made to prevent such acts of violence against female journalist while carrying out their profession.
- Establish a national media code of ethics by establishing a state or independent institution in consultation with female journalist trade union sensible society to combat sexual harassment of female journalist and investigate complaints
- Conduct gender audits of media institutions to ensure gender equality and safeguard the public safeguards and publish the results to encourage transparency and accountability
- Failure to further establish this accountability should reside in legal action, fines and penalties such as not issuing media ID cards to the relevant institution
- establish a formal legal system including legal aid to protect the privacy anonymity of victimized female journalist and to ensure justice
- Creating a centralized confidential national database that monitors such incidence reported by media institutions
- implement awareness programs for female journalist regarding digital security since ignorance of the legal background is also a major reason for covering up such incidents a word should be made to educate them about the technical side as well as the legal side
- collaborate with social media companies to enact legislation to prevent sexual harassment on online platforms

- Mobilize an immediate response service to report and take action on sexual harassment that occurs online or on social media
- introduce transparent merit based recruitment and promotion practices without considering gender in recruitment promotion to position in the media sector
- Including mandatory training on equality workplace rights and prevention of sexual harassment in the media education curriculum in Sri Lanka

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Gender

Sex is a biological division. It is a biological fact that is inherited from birth. Gender is a social characteristic that is formed due to non-biological social relations. The classification of human behavior into male and female is based on the division of labour. This division of labour is also presented as natural. Although, the task that can be performed and not outside the framework going beyond it is socially frowned upon. Although, it appears to be universal it is a concept that varies from culture to culture and time to time. Masculine culture has defined men and women with stereotypes. Gender based works frame ideas such as “man is a social animal strong sexually aggressive rational analytical violent impulsive and moved and a leader”, while women are “family animals, gentle, docile, is sexually oppressed, emotional, environmentally friendly, patient and easily moved subordinates”. The woman in the Lankan tradition “is not suitable for walking in the night”, “the waist can be taken into two palms (thin waist)”, “women’s luck is in the dirt”, women’s wisdom is in the palm of the hand”, has made women restricted into these types and is considered that she should not go beyond these limits and conquer worlds of politics etc. These monotheistic theories have succeeded in taking away the freedom and rights of contemporary women who actively contribute to social development such as women being unable to vote what the social meaning system is a descriptive construction through discourse one sexuality has historically become an identity (Butler, 1990)

The Woman

The philosopher Michael Foucault has stated that there is no such thing as a woman. He argues that the question “who is a woman?” cannot be answered by biology alone. Instead it must be understood in terms of how power and knowledge shaped gender subjectivities. Michael Foucault direct and specific statement regarding the concept of “woman” is evident in his analysis of power the body and sexuality in his book the History of Sexuality (1978). He criticizes the naturalization of gender categories and argues that the concept of sexuality is a construct used to conceal the exercise of power over sexuality.

“The notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal it made it possible toward the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality causing the ladder to appear not in its essential and positive relation to power but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate (Foucault 1978 p. 155)”.

This means that gender and sexual categories such as “woman” are not natural entities but produced and regulated through power relations. Through feminist interpretation Foucault suggests that women's bodies are judged inferior through norms based on men's physical abilities and that biology is broken down into social characteristics which constitute a social construction of gender. That is, culture creates her. Masculinity and femininity is created by language and culture.

According to Judith Butler, gender is a cultural construct. If masculinity and feminine are socially imposed it oppresses both women and men. If one does not have true agency and act artificially. Then one is called performativity. This identity assigned to one by others is rainforest in the repetitive action of social institutions, including cinema. The system of social meaning subjects meant to a paradox of subjection (Butler, 1990).

In her book the Second Sex, French feminist Simone De Beauvoir, presents the idea that “one is not born a woman but becomes one”, suggesting that a woman is not made a woman by her biological body but by the socialization institutions of society. It is an adaptation to an identity given by society “woman is not a predetermined biological category but a social and cultural construct shaped by history and experience”. The idea of a cultural construct is presented. She questions the existence of “women”. She argues that for centuries, women have been forced into a secondary position relative to men by attributing to them the main characteristics appropriate to woman (Beauvoir, 1974).

Gender Practices in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, a broader disparity in the context of gender inequality can be witnessed. While women make a 52% of Sri Lanka's population there are severely underrepresented in key

decision-making areas holding only 9.7% of Parliament seats and 8.8% of senior management roles in the corporate sector.

The 2023 Labour Force Survey Annual Report released by the Department of Population and Statistics of Sri Lanka provides a detailed analysis of the gender based labour force participation in Sri Lanka. Accordingly the economically active population was about 8.1 million comprising 66.5% males and 33.5% of females. The economically inactive population comprised a 28.6% males and 71.4% females. This indicates that male participation in the labour force is significantly higher than female participation across the country. The Labour Force Participation Rate shows a persistent gender gap. In the fourth quarter of 2023 the male LFPR was 67.4% while the female LFPR was 29.4%. This indicates that male participation in the labour force is significantly higher than female participation across the country. This gap has remained stable in recent years with male participation always significantly higher than female participation. By age group male participation is 94.5% in the 40 to 44 age group while female participation peaks at 35 to 39 years but remains much lower overall. Unemployment rates are high among men in all age groups with youth unemployment and female unemployment contributing this proportionately to national unemployment. For example female unemployment rates were observed to be as high as 6.8% compared to 3.17% among men. The report highlights that educated women have higher unemployment rates compared to educated men. Sectoral and occupational distribution also shows that women despite having higher educational attainment still have lower participation and higher unemployment reflecting structural gender inequalities in the Sri Lanka labour market (Department of Census and Statistics 2024).

This finding highlights the persistent gender disparities in labour force participation, employment opportunities and unemployment with social roles and caregiving responsibilities cited as contributing factors. Women's labour force participation remains significantly lower than men's and gender based challenges affect their economic participation and career advancement. The open economic policy that emerged in Sri Lanka after 1977 led to a shift from an agrarian economy to urban centers and a shift to migrant

services. Women's migration to cities for garment factories tea industry and overseas employment were also trends in the 1980s. With free education providing educational opportunities to all without gender discrimination. Women who had previously had limited choices and opportunities are now seeing challenging social norms. Women's labour which had been limited to fields such as teachers, nurses and domestic workers was directed into various industries and professional fields challenging the homogenization of labour into "male work" and "female work" until then.

The amount of unpaid work that we do for their families and communities is enormous compared to the amount of work they do. There are also disparities in pay for men and women as well as negative perceptions of women's employment opportunities, promotions and training opportunities. There are many reasons why women are undervalued and undervalued in the workplace, one reason is the gender pay gap. This pay gap exists in many countries around the world and can be caused by a variety of factors including discrimination and bias against women. Another reason is the underrepresentation of women in leadership or executive level positions. Although women make up half of the workforce women are still underrepresented and in a society with a mayor dominated ideology their contributions are not recognition and given due recognition.

The expectation of female leadership roles in society clashes with traditional gender roles and invisible barrier such as a glass ceiling limit the appreciation and advancement of female leaders, and women are often held to a higher standards than men for achieving leadership roles. Motherhood ease also cited as a significant barrier and women's issues such as maternally menstruation or pregnancy and other family responsibilities often devalue women and exclude them from leadership opportunities. Furthermore, the double or triple shifts that many women face such as child care, feeding children, caring for elderly parents and the elderly as well as cooking and cleaning the house can make it difficult for them to rise to and remain in leadership positions. Women leaders face unique obstacles in their careers and are often perceived as overworked and underappreciated.

It also limits women's access to senior leadership roles despite being equally qualified as men. Women leaders face partisanship gender biased expectations and various sexist symbols which minimize their opportunities for leadership experience and professional development.

Political Leadership

Compared to many countries, women in Sri Lanka gain political rights early. In 1931 women were granted the right to vote and stand for election and a British colonial rule. When Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 this was the first time that women granted the right to vote (Inter Parliamentary Union 2020). Sri Lanka progressive history of women's political rights is reflected in the world first female Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. She served three terms 1960 to 1965, 1972- 1977 and 1994 -2000 and was a pioneer in shaping the socio-political landscape Sri Lanka. During her tenure Sri Lanka was transformed into a democratic Sri Lanka with a new constitution in 1972. She pursued socialist policies including the nationalization of major industries and land reforms and played a significant role in international diplomacy particularly among non-aligned nations. Bandaranaike also established institutions focused on women and children include in the Ministry of Women and Children's affairs of Sri Lanka. Her political legacy extends through her family. Meanwhile her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga served as Sri Lanka first female president from 1994 to 2005 for cementing the role of women in the countries' political leadership.

The 2024 Parliament represent the largest number of female legislators in Sri Lankan history with 22 female MPs which makes a gradual progress in gender inclusion and a recent government including the NPP era. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya became the third Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 2024 marking a new advance in women's participation under the contemporary political context including the NPP government (parliament.LK 2025). Sri Lanka has taken several positive steps to address significant gap in women's electoral representation and achieve greater gender equality. One such step is the introduction of a

quota at the local government level and new electoral system with a quota at the provincial level. Women's representation in the Sri Lankan Parliament stood at 5.3% in 2021 among the lowest in South Asia and well below the global average of 25.4%. In contrast, India's parliament has around 157 women but still struggles with gender parity in political leadership. Sri Lanka's local government introduced a 25% women's quota which significantly increased women's representation at the local level. However, challenges remain in terms of significant political influence. Despite legal and policy efforts to improve representation, both countries exhibit social and structural barriers that limit women's political roles (IFES 2022).

Rights

Rights are universal standards of human dignity and all human beings are entitled to enjoy their rights without distinction of any kind such as class, sex, race, colour, age, nationality, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation or belief, or any other status. Human rights are the fundamental and inalienable rights that every person has and is entitled to by virtue of his or her being a human being. Rights are the universal standards of human dignity, equality, freedom and peace. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights (ICESPR) of 1966 provide the basic foundation for international human rights.

Women's rights are also human rights. Human rights, responsibility, social status and access to resources are not determined by gender. All women in the world are subject to various forms of violence and violations of rights more than men. The term "equality" has different meanings and all are equal before the law. In Sri Lanka, violence based on sex and gender is recognised as a violation of human rights and national and international laws and policies have been agreed to prevent such violence. The constitution of Sri Lanka explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender. All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law. This is confirmed by articles 12 (2) and 12 (3) of the constitution.

the Sri Lankan government has adopted the Women's Charter of 1993 and the National Action Plan for Women which is currently enforce stating that the state is opposed to discrimination on the basis of sex. The penal code which was amended in 1995 has included legal provisions against perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence in line with international recognition. And at a broad level the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005 is also a positive intervention to address the sexual and gender based violence through legislation. In addition strategies to address sexual and gender based violence have been planned at the national level in the currently implemented National Youth Policy National Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, National Mental Health policy, anti-trafficking policy, National Family Policy, National Mental Health Policy, National Human Rights Plan and guidelines for a Code of conduct on Sexual Violence.

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women reiterate and highlight the importance and protective women from all forms of violence and produce including sexual abuse.

Gender equality is fundamental to the realization of human rights and ease an aspiration that benefits all of society including girls and women.

Then the quality is fundamental to the realization of human rights and ease an aspiration that benefits all society including girls and women. The universal benefits of gender equality are well documented and several international framework have affirmed it's a centrality to human rights and sustainable development. For example the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing conference adopted unanimously by 189 countries in 1995 and still the strongest global agreement to advance and protect equality and justice for girls and women recognizes that it creates well-being for all people. Despite the promise of equality progress towards it has been slow fragile incremental and reversible. In every region of the world girls and women are still more likely to be poor, illiterate, hungry, unhealthy, underrepresented in decision-making positions, legally restricted, politically marginalized, threatened by violence (UNDP 2013).

Sexual gender based violence is a violation of human rights. The imbalance in power relations between women and men is shaped by various socio-cultural norms and practices. Sexual or gender based violence can occur in any context with a private or public regardless of age, sexual identity, class, caste, ethnicity, education and religion. Violence takes many forms and includes any act that affects the physical sexual mental emotional or social well-being of women and men. Sri Lanka has signed a number of international conventions that unconditionally agreed to prevent violence among them the 1979 United Nations Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or CEDAW convention stands out. This gender based differences have been identified as discrimination that significantly impact the ability of women to enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men.

All forms of discrimination against women include discrimination exclusion no special treatment based on gender based values believes all practices. Sri Lanka signed the CEDAW convention in 1980 and it entered into force in 1981.

In addition national level provisions have been put in place on abortion incest cultural rights rape bodily integrity and grave sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment is a common and potentially serious form of violence against women and girls in Sri Lanka. Article 11 of the CEDAW convention and UN recommendation No. 19 on violence against women define sexual harassment as any unwanted conduct word or act of a sexual nature that is of a sexual nature and that involve sexual advances, comments, showing of nude photographs and sexual advances. Section 345 of the Penal Code No. 22 of 1995 as amended criminalises sexual harassment in public places and work places. According to the Penal Code sexual harassment in public places and workplace is a punishable offense. Sexual harassment is defined as any act of omission by a person in authority at workplace or other place of work that is sexually harassing.

Gender Equality and Gender Equity

Equal treatment does not mean the same treatment but emphasizes equality of outcomes to be achieved in a development process. Equality is the equal rights, equal responsibilities, equal opportunities and equal treatment that both sexes should have in common. Equality is This is the process that should be fair for both sexes. Otherwise equality is the way to achieve equality. Achieving gender equality in a respectful work environment includes equal opportunities and consideration in employment equal pay and leave for equal work a safe work environment equal trading opportunities and job evaluations and equal opportunities for meaningful career development as well as prevented discrimination against to be meant on the basis of marriage or motherhood and pregnancy or maternity leave. Gender sensitive reporting training facilities resources and social protection mechanisms can also help achieve equality and example of disease the use of quotas in political leadership.

In 1908, women in the United States marked for fair wages fair working hours and the right to vote and the first woman's day was celebrated in the United States on February 20 1909. Later women's Day was celebrated to demand women's right to work the right to vote the right to receive vocational training the right to public representation and to injustices against women. After 1911 international women's day was organized to win the rights of working women the International Labour Organizations maternity protection convention of 1990 (No.3) also guaranteed working women the right to take leave before and after child birth for maternity protection to receive medical care and to receive the same income during the maternity leave. In addition the International Labour Organization's Equal Remuneration Convention of 1951 (No.100), the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women adopted in 1954, The convention Concerning the Abolition of Force Labour in 1959 the Convention and Consent to Marriage, minimum age for marriage and registration of marriage in 1962 and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education in 1962 are also important here.

Media Reporting on Gender Issues

Since the general functioning of society is based on male superiority information reporting in the media occurs within gender stereotypes. Otherwise media activity also works by appreciating male dominated traditional ideologies. Often this leads to the marginalization of women and the male gaze is also exerted on them. Gender sensitive reporting enables men and women to be valued equally and to change traditional social ideologies. It is also essential to build a more up-to-date comprehensive and realistic mission in information reporting. For example although ancient Buddhist literature states that a woman should go or walk like “Visakha” and modern songs that goes as “I can’t be like ancient Visakha...”, challenges gender stereotypes.

It is a modern necessity to produce media content that is sensitive to gender inequalities and to portray women and men fairly in the media. There is a negative ideology in society regarding women (ideological blindness). In a male dominated society there is a practice of believing that women are traditional is subordinated and that this should be the case and an ideology of male superiority existence society as well as women.

It is a pressing need to eliminate gender stereotypes and trivialize women's issues avoid negative coverage of women and avoid biased or sensationalized media reporting. In order to portrait gender fairly it is important to eliminate gender stereotypes in the selection of sources of information and in the construction of stories.

Balance representation of women and men in media coverage reflecting the true composition of society and diverse human experiences. Accurately reflecting gender roles and opinions in society when selecting sources or sources for media reporting they should be especially considered in reporting on traditionally male dominated subject such as science politics economic sports and technology in media reporting. It is important to ask women and men for equal opinions on every topic, be sensitive to unpopular stories that are not visible to the media, cover women's published and unpublished information, explore alternative interpretations of women's issues and report in a balanced manner, work to increase women's participation as experts on media content and be concerned about media ethics.

Women and girls in particular are subject to negative stereotypes and patriarchal norms as well as stereotypes in the media. Respectful reporting of the extensive contributions of women is replaced by stigmatization and marginalization. Violence against to be men and girls is often trivialized and normalized.

Attention should be paid to the use of language that is fair and does not miss present or exclude gender. Attention should be paid to the use of gender sensitive language and especially to the use of masculine based language.

The use of problematic and derogatory terms for rape in Sinhala Language

Media coverage of gender based violence open uses languages that frame women and girls in harmful ways, reinforces discriminatory stereotypes and further marginalizes them in society. For example Sinhala media outlets often use the term corrupt (dushanaya) dirty (kelesima), for the simple implication is that if there is no survivor the victim is dirty or corrupt. In addition the use of derogatory terms such as “Ganika” (prostitute) to describe sex workers is derogatory. It is more appropriate to use a nomenclature such as sexual worker. The use of such derogatory and derogatory language in Sinhala media reinforces stereotypes and marginalizes women as a less valuable category of individuals in society.

This long-term and persistent media missing interpretation violates their fundamental rights jeopardises their well-being and social standing and leads to the entrenchment of destructive social norms and perceptions in society. The use of “He” as a common noun usually representing both male and female.

This long-term and continuous media is representation violates their fundamental rights to jeopardises their wellbeing and social standing and lead to the deep rooting of destructive social norms and perceptions in society. The use of “he” as a common noun to represent both men and women (baby, child, human, dog, elephant) is used. This linguistic habit has become a habit of seeing women as they really are a normalization and a standard in decision-making. It sets the stage for the unconscious habit of thinking that we men are inherent in men (human experience male experience) standard which is why the feminine

gender is almost not used to referred to personal name such as chairman, cameraman, police officer. It is also customary in society to address the wife after marriage using the husband surname (Mr. and Mrs.) and interpret the man as a guardian. In media reporting it is also important to eliminate language that excludes misrepresents or derogatory toward women given the unique power of the media to shape and change social ideologies.

The media has a role to play in exposing and discussing gender equality issues including topics such as gender based violence women's rights and policies that promote gender equality. For example gender sensitive topics (child marriage virginity sexual abuse sexual harassment) can be selected to create a social discourse. However violence against women and girls is often trivialized and the seriousness of incident such as sexual harassment is often underestimated.

The aim to support the empowerment of women in media roles and promote diversity among new sources including often underrepresented groups. It should encourage media organizations to adopt specific policies to responsibly cover sensitive issue issues such as gender equality and equal representation and domestic violence and conflict related sexual violence.

Media reporting on crimes against women as well as sensationalized stereotypes tend to ensure ties such women and highlight them negatively. Such reporting is done with the commercial purpose that priority Prioritize and citation over empathy. In cases of sexual abuse victim blaming especially against be man and minor is common especially in the Sinhala media. This type of reporting not only normalize violence against women men and girls but also encourages a culture of shame and silence for the exasperating the existing vulnerabilities of women and girls in Sri Lanka.

Unethical and harmful reporting on women and girls in Sri Lanka remains a significant challenge. It violate their rights rainforest is harmful social norms and perpetuate negative stereotypes. This reporting culture not only denies equal opportunities to women and girls but also normalize violence against them.

There are several key points that should be considered in media reporting regarding the protection and promotion of gender rights.

- General equity and equality in media reporting
- Eliminating negative gender base portrays and gender stereotypes
- The media should actively contribute to covering gender issues including diverse gender identities ensuring women's freedom of expression and educating the public to make positive changes regarding gender stereotypes
- Raising awareness about gender equality and professional rights
- Opposing gender base insults abuse harassment and violence
- Media ethics must be strengthened
- Training mentoring and appreciation should be provided to journalist as well as heads of media institutions
- Media regulation to intervene ethically to prevent the sexualisation and passive objectification of women remaining media narrative so commercial purposes and the recording of them in the male gaze
- Implementing national media policies and media campaign aimed at promoting gender representation

Conclusion

Media is a for-profit industry. The media directly and indirectly influences individual perceptions by shaping social perspectives and public opinion or to get opinion about gender. Negative media portraits of women based on gender stereotypes are evident in many media reports. Contemporary media content further perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes and produces narratives that reinforce these social beliefs. These portraits contribute to sexism harassment and violence and surprise women's personal and professional aspirations. Depiction that objectify and sexualize women influence the internationalization of social cultural ideals. Addressing these portrayals is important to promote gender equality and well-being.

Gender sensitive reporting contributes to building adjust society that protects rights by creating gender equality, challenging harmful cultural norms and changing public attitudes and perceptions through responsible media representation. media ethics media education media professional English some as well as the integration of media consumers and opinion leaders as an active influence group on the media provide the space to build a gender sensitive society that protective protect rights.

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