

Analysis of the Roles of Media in Promoting the Development of Gender Equality in Liangshan Area

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Abstract: This study focuses on how social media encourages people to focus on education in specific suburbs and how it promotes gender equality. Therefore, this study will explore how social media can promote gender equality in Liangshan. This study will support this view through research data and other studies and propose possible solutions. The results show that the current gender inequality still exists in the Liangshan area, which is reflected in the low rate of girls' entrance to school and the relative lack of sex education. Social media is helping to solve this problem to a certain extent and introducing some valuable knowledge to them. The article believes that the Liangshan region should continue to promote this trend and bring better equality, protection, and education to poor women. The government should regulate some social media so as to show more positive content to people and better promote the development of gender equality.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Social Media, Education, Sex Education, Liang Shan

1. Introduction

Gender equality has always been a global issue. With the development of social media, the phenomenon of gender inequality is getting more and more attention. Gender inequality is manifested in two significant ways: education and ideology. For instance, according to the Global Monitoring Report, it mentions that: girls' participation in education was relatively low in 2002; there were 100 million students not involved in school, and 55% of them were girls; also, in 76 of 180 countries, gender parity is not achieved at the primary level, and the difference almost always comes at the expense of girls [1]. Moreover, sex education is also a massive problem for women's rights; some children might get sexual harassment or sexual assault because they are deficient in education, especially sex education. However, many places in China have such problems, especially in remote mountainous areas where such issues are more prominent. Specifically, in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Region, people are sensitive when they mention the word "sex" due to their special beliefs, cultural practices, and marriage customs [2]. Also, the Liangshan region is one of the main battlefields of poverty eradication in the country and is also the focus of national attention [3]. Furthermore, the female students in the Liangshan area have a relatively low pass rate, low enrollment, and high attrition rate. According to the data, the enrollment in elementary for Liangshan girls is lower than 50%, and only 29.06% of the girls graduate from elementary school; among 407 girls, only 197 of them got the associated degree [4]. Thus, by reason of the peculiarities of the Liangshan region, this research is going to collect the data that has been published on sites

that establish the ratio of males to female school attendance and the interference of females due to gender issues. This article can add some of the developments in technology that have helped some poor students have the opportunity to study. The value of this study lies in establishing how social media can promote a sense of equality among these girls.

2. Social Media

The female education issue has existed for dozens of years, but people did not give the most advice to help them. However, the appearance and existence of technology and social media changed the game drastically. As a result, using social media as an activist tool for people's ideas and rights becomes more common. For example, the use of hashtags created a special column for people to discuss. The hashtag activism of “# Black Lives Matter” has been tweeted over 30 million times, with a high of 500,000 tweets in a day in 2016 [5]. From this event, it strongly shows how social media can affect people's attitudes, and “social media provides a unique means of fostering collaboration, networking, mentorship, and dissemination of research, which may help to both increase representation and close the gender gap within the field” [6].

3. Gender Inequality in the Liangshan Region

3.1. Education

Liangshan has a relatively high attrition rate. The higher grade level, the more female students they will lose. Based on the data, the loss of girls in the second grade of primary school in the whole prefecture was 31.6%, and in sixth grade, it increases to 70.34% [4]. Also, insufficient overall awareness of the importance of education among some officials and parents and traditional beliefs and customs are the historical roots that affect the enrollment of girls in Liangshan, causing the rate of girls who attended school to become extremely low [4]. Especially, people in the Liangshan region think that “women who read books have more mouths, more sophistry, and are harder to discipline, so it's better not to read. Parents also think that sooner or later the girl is going to marry, belonging to someone else; thus, parents think girls with or without education have little to do with their future, and losing money to send girls to school to study will be uneconomical. Therefore, the enthusiasm to send girls to study has not been high. Especially when families are financially constrained and there are boys who need to attend school, it is difficult for Yi girls to realize their dream of studying” [7]. The traditional customs are not the only problem. The resources that are distributed to the education they have is another problem. In the remote mountainous area, it also has the problem of severe teacher shortage because the environment is too awful and limited financial resources cannot afford to pay for teachers. In the Liangshan region, the disconnection between the current teaching contents and the real needs has reduced the desire of some people to study, and the construction of the teaching team has become difficult [8].

3.2. Sex Education

Education not only benefits female gender equality, but it can also promote sex equality. In Liangshan, girls usually find it difficult to acquire sex knowledge through formal schooling, whereas they got information from the peer-to-peer conversation. However, even though some schools might offer health courses, they will be useless for girls [9]. Without learning about sex, girls are difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of men and women, and they can be violated by boys easily.

4. Analysis of Social Media for Gender Equality

4.1. The Effect of Social Media

Nevertheless, there are a large number of people who try to fight against this inequality and provide sufficient and qualified education to the poor girls, ensuring that Liangshan women have the ability and right to make the right choices in life. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), they present that: "invest in today's girls, tomorrow's women," which infers that promoting gender equality will be a huge development for society [10]. Furthermore, social media in China is attempting to promote gender equality. According to research, the number of women in Liangshan who use Kuai Shou(a social media app similar to Tiktok) is large, and the coverage is extensive [3]. Women can use social media to become more economically independent. For example, Grace Chow, a female internet celebrity, started in 2012. She has been running her own Taobao store since 2012, and in 2014 she founded her own brand, "GRACE CHOW". Later, in 2015, she was ranked 47th on the list of China's internet celebrities. Her success has inspired many people to start their own businesses, especially women in the makeup and fashion industries. Both housewives and teenagers are slowly coming into contact with the network industry. Also, on this kind of e-commerce platform, it is not easy to be suppressed by men or to encounter gender inequality. Everything is accomplished through their own efforts. Back in the Liangshan region, Yang Hui, Vice Governor of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, who is a local female, returned from studies and committed to building her hometown. She chose to work with social media to broadcast the poverty alleviation live, and over 4 million people tuned in to watch.

4.2. Providing More Teaching Access

With the connection to social media, people are more able to express their thoughts directly to the audience. Furthermore, these apps would be simple to use, allowing women with limited education to present themselves on the platform. Students in Liangshan are so addicted to social media that they always use their parents' phones and learn things from what they see online, which is a way to promote gender equality so that girls can have their own standard ideas. Also, the Liangshan region lacks teacher resources, with insufficient investment in education development and poor faculty strength. Hence, connecting social media and education together can afford more educational opportunities for students with better resources.

4.3. Enhance Women's Self-awareness

Furthermore, raising awareness among women that they are not inferior to men is vital too. Because of some traditional consciousness, many girls may think they should just be very family-oriented and be full-time housewives. Starting from ancient China, people have a sense that women were in charge of the inside and men were in charge of the outside, which means women should stay at home and take care of the household chores and family members while men are mainly responsible for making money and socializing outside. Based on this issue, social media will be the best choice to keep people from slacking off on the topic. For instance, there is a significant event that happened in the past that affected the world. In 2017, actress Ashley Judd accused filmmaker Harvey Weinstein of sexual harassment in a New York Times article. Later, actor Alyssa Milano sent a tweet: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted, write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." On the day it was sent, it had over 200K replies, Facebook posts had over 400K, and 45% of the social media users used "me too" to post about the inequality in society. Due to this large effect and trend, finally, in 2020, the filmmaker Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison.

Through this event, people pay more attention to sexual inequality and become more willing to speak out to the crowd. This event can spread dramatically not only because of the popularity that celebrities bring, but also the tremendous number of users. In 2022, Facebook and YouTube have the most monthly active users(MAUs), which is 2910 million and 2562 millions active users, respectively, and China's WeChat has over 1263 millions of MAUs. The large quantity of number enables people's voices to be heard and does not spare those who do not respect gender [11]. Therefore, the existence of social media can possibly solve this problem since girls can learn the outside world information from their cell phones. They can learn about different ways of living to motivate themselves to get out of their isolated environment of origin through learning and self-effort.

5. Discussion

Nonetheless, there are still some challenges that are found when people are pursuing the rights and qualities they want. In that case, if people need to fully exploit social media, it requires a lot of marketing strategies and communication skills. Thus, it's hard for normal people to get attention on social media, especially those who live in poverty. Moreover, it's hard to sustainably make the information interesting, frivolous, and distributable without compromising the quality of the content, because arguably, today's content must be converged across multiple platforms [12]. Specifically, some media reports have stereotypes and prejudices about Liangshan, so they selectively report a lot of negative news and make the audience ignore some positive statements [3]. Even though social media has some limitations and drawbacks, under the supervision of the government, social media will inevitably become dominant ideology development in the future, becoming a medium of information transmission. The government needs to pay attention to the wise and proper use of social media, promote the use of social media, and vigorously regulate the application of social media to prevent people from spreading bad information such as language abuse and racism. Thus, when the government sees this trend, they should promote and bolster the use of social media, picking up the outstanding events that do not have any popularity that very few people have viewed it. Hence, the government and the social media platforms should advertise it in a proper and appropriate way to let people visualize it.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, because of the locus of Liangshan and the underdeveloped economy, they induced people to become closed-minded, have backward values such as favoring boys over girls and lack educational resources. Hence, Liangshan cannot offer equality of education as well as individual development among boys and girls. Under the government's supervision, promoting social media properly can actually bring benefits to the poor people such as facilitating education resources, boosting the economy for local people, elevating the sense of gender equality, and promoting individual development. Therefore, social media is a powerful platform for people to learn about and help regions like Liangshan overcome their obstacles. There are some limitations. This study did not use new quantitative or qualitative data methods to prove the situation and phenomenon, but only analyzed the situation and data that existed. Since the controversies are identified in this and other studies, one of the future directions of this topic is to explore how each specific social media stage helps these women gain knowledge. People can factually see how each social media platform is enhancing gender equality by collecting the hits and readings on the topics that are related to women, gender, and those remote mountainous areas.

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