Original Article

The Use of Digital Media Tools in Nigeria: A Panacea against Gender Discrimination, Female Journalists Representation and Participation in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the use digital tools in media practice have bridged the gap between the existing dichotomy (Male and Female) in journalism. It has revolutionized news coverage by eliminating the need for traditional procedures and protocols associated with professional journalism, such as being physically present on the field for balanced and newsworthy reportage. Moreover, digital media tools have reduced gender-based discrimination in media organizations, which used to assign men to more physically demanding roles while relegating women to menial tasks. Despite this paradigm shift orchestrated by digital media, female journalists are still being relegated to the extent that only few female journalists rise to the top in organizational hierarchical placement. In Nigeria, female journalists continue to face barriers such as unequal opportunities and unfair treatment in media organizations. One of the major issues is the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in media organizations. In this regard, this research present four major fronts from scholarly researches using Textual Analysis to identify the extent and effects of gender discrimination against female journalists in digital media practice in Nigeria; examine factors that contribute to gender discrimination against female journalists in media practice in Nigeria; assess the impact of gender discrimination on the representation and Participation of female journalists in digital media practice in Nigeria and explore the strategies female journalists in Nigeria use to overcome gender discrimination in digital media practice.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital media technology has subtly taken over the method of News coverage and reportage from traditional media outlets like radio, television, and newspapers, however, despite the increase in digital media tools (Internet of a thing, 5G, Fiber Optics technology) which made reportage seamless and flexible, the challenge of task distribution based on gender (Male & Female) and the doubts in the abilities of female journalists to deliver on assigned tasked still exists. In many instances, male journalists are automatically given responsibilities and duties that should be available to all genders such as criminal investigative journalism. This is due to the widespread belief that males are more physically capable and have the ability to handle difficult duties, while indirectly relegating the many diverse skills such as consistency, creativity, ingenuity, and patience that women possess that could contribute to the overall growth of the organization. The argument made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 2019 publication, "Gender, Media, and ICTs: New Approaches for Research, Education, and Training." It contends that while digital communication has rapidly developed and is obvious to all, the slow transformation of gender inequality in media and through media frequently goes unnoticed. Only few people have a thorough comprehension of the complex underlying causes and the most efficient solutions. Also, in addition to outlining new strategies for study, instruction, and training, the paper investigates how gender, media, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) interacts in developed countries.

A study carried out by Eckert in (2018) across countries like Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States where 109 female bloggers were examined about their online experiences after reporting on feminism and maternity politics, three-quarters of the female bloggers stated they had unfavourable ones. These female journalists according to UNESCO (2020) are faced with negative remarks, rape threats, and other forms of internet harassment, female journalists are often times faced with increased attacks when issues such as politics, human rights, and social policy are been reported. It was also discovered that some of the respondents concentrated on reporting on good news and avoided adding disturbing facts in their news pieces in order to avoid harassment. The UNESCO (2020) study found out that when faced with online harassment, some of the women (30%) self-censor on social media, 20% stop engaging in any online contacts, and 18% shun audience participation. This demonstrated how harassment of female journalists can impact the news coverage they provide.

Also, online slurs and harsh comments directed towards journalists are common occurrence for instance they are referred to as sluts, overweight, ugly, and other names (Pain and Chen, 2018). Adam (2017) in research on online harassment of women journalists covering technology discovered that 40 percent of the abused women report happened online, either in the comments section of a news piece or on social media,

In order to determine whether and how online harassment affects female journalists' ability to perform their jobs, Chen et al. (2018) interviewed 75 female journalists from Germany, India, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. According to the study, attacks on female journalists were more frequent when they wrote about subjects that were more frequently linked

with men and contentious problems, such as politics, immigration, race, or feminism.

In Nigeria, gender discrimination exists in form or another every aspect of the society, including the media, However, because of nature of women in journalism, female media practitioners are frequently ignored, which in some way prevents them from reaching their full potential and ability. One of the major reasons while inequality exist in the nation can be traced to the rooted gender disparity that permeates both culture and society. The media has a significant role in influencing and reinforcing cultural attitudes and views regarding gender roles and identities in Nigeria, as it does in many other nations throughout the world. However, negative stereotypes and discrimination are frequently perpetuated in the media through the portrayal of both men and women, which have a detrimental effect on gender equality. Women in Nigeria experience numerous sorts of abuse and discrimination, and they are frequently represented in the media as being inferior, weak, and fragile to men. Typical gender roles for women include becoming housewives or submissive subjects of male authority.

Additionally, the media in Nigeria frequently supports a limited and unattainable standard of beauty that is based on Western values, which can reinforce gender inequality. Women who do not meet these criteria are frequently shunned and left out of media portrayals, which can cause inadequacy and low self-esteem. Nigerian media coverage of gender-based violence is framed negatively since victims are sometimes made to feel guilty and embarrassed for the abuse they endure. In general, gender discrimination and the media are closely related in Nigeria, and addressing one necessitates tackling the other. This can be done through encouraging gender-sensitive reporting and developing a more diverse and inclusive media representation that captures both men's and women's experiences and reality.

According to Ekeh (2018), patriarchy in society is ingrained in Nigerian culture and contributes to men's dominance in politics, which sustains gender disparity. This is encouraged and furthered by the media's portrayal of female politicians as being less capable than their male colleagues in the political sphere. In support of this Bauwel and Krijnen (2021) discussed recent research on the subject of gender and media, emphasized the political nature of these issues and made the case that by paying attention to them is essential to advancing social justice and gender equality. Nigeria, like many other nations throughout the world, has seen a shift in how people communicate and consume information thanks to digital media. However, gender discrimination is still a major problem in Nigerian society, and this issue has also appeared in digital media.

The transmission of negative gender stereotypes is one of the most significant ways that digital media supports gender discrimination in Nigeria. For instance, in well-known Nigerian music videos, women are frequently represented as being beneath males or as objects to be utilized for male pleasure. Similar to this misogynistic remarks and abuse of women can be common on social networking sites and online forums. Digital media might not only reinforce negative stereotypes but also facilitate gender-based violence. This is especially true in instances of internet harassment and revenge porn, both of which are on the rise in Nigeria.

lastly, gender discrimination also exists in the digital media sector of Nigeria. In the tech sector, women are frequently underrepresented, and they are less likely to be in positions of leadership in the media. In addition to limiting women's possibilities for career progression, this also lessens the representation of varied viewpoints in media coverage and content creation. In general, gender discrimination in Nigeria's digital media is a complicated and multifaceted issue that has to be addressed with a coordinated effort. To combat damaging preconceptions, media literacy initiatives, campaigns to promote gender equality in the digital industry, and legal frameworks.

FEMALE JOURNALIST REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN JOURNALISM

Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media survey was carried out in 2010 by the International Women Media Foundation. The study discovered that writing and editing, two occupations closely related to routine news collecting, accounted for the majority of the news coverage workforce in different locations. Men occupied almost 66% (63.9%) of the occupations in these parameters, compared to women who occupied 36.1% of the posts.

The poll also showed that men held around three-fourths (73.2%) of the positions in the technical professional dimension, which includes those held by those who work in camera, sound, and lighting during the broadcast news production. On the other hand, little over a quarter (26.8%) of the positions in this field were held by women. With the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, where women and men came relatively close to equality in this occupational category, especially in nations like Namibia and Zimbabwe, this gender trend was continuously seen across the seven regions.

Notably, men held around 66% (65.6%) of the production and design roles, with women holding about a third of the positions (34.4%). This group includes positions in the creative parts of news production such as graphic designers, photographers, artists, and wardrobe designers.

The study came to the conclusion that there is still a male dominance in journalism, particularly in the technical facets of the media. Women's participation in news production remained much lower, despite notable outliers that were noticed in several nations and indicated near gender parity in certain occupational categories.

Research on the "Problems Faced by Women Journalists" also emphasized the different types of prejudice that female journalists encounter, such as verbal harassment and bias from news sources. Akhileshwari (1990) also noted that India has some of the lowest rates of female employment worldwide. The proportion of women in electronic media, which ranges from 30 to 40 percent, is higher than that in print media. In spite of this, the article mentions that women are frequently restricted to softer beats, like managing feature writing or superficial issues.

Ross (2001), who examined the impact of gender in the working life of women journalists, claimed that gender played a role in the newsroom for some women but not for all.

According to her study on women at work, Journalism as En-Gendered Practice in journalism studies, the impact of gender was frequently felt adversely. The study identified concerns with working in a male-dominated field, such as poor emphasis given to women's issues coverage and a male-oriented culture that may be antagonistic to working mothers. The majority of the women who responded to the study said that having more women in leadership roles would help to advance a news agenda that is more supportive of women.

A global poll of around 1000 female journalists was done in 2014 by the International News Safety Institute, and the results showed that nearly two-thirds of them had encountered intimidation, threats, or abuse at work.

Rosalind (2013) in her book "Gender and the Media" observed that a variety of early feminist media critiques emerged, underlining the necessity of addressing gender concerns in media portrayal and practices.

In Nigeria, like in many other countries, women journalists face unique challenges. The patriarchal nature of society, cultural expectations, and gender-based discrimination can create obstacles for women pursuing careers in journalism. These challenges range from societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, harassment and threats, lack of support systems, and limited access to resources and training opportunities. As a result, women may be discouraged from entering or continuing in the field, leading to their underrepresentation in Nigerian media.

Objectives of the Study

This article is guided by the following objectives:

To identify the extent and nature of gender discrimination against female journalists in digital media practice in Nigeria.

- To examine factors that contribute to gender discrimination against female journalists in media practice in Nigeria.

- To assess the impact of gender discrimination on the representation and participation of female journalists in media practice in Nigeria.

- To explore the strategies female journalists in Nigeria, use to overcome gender discrimination in media practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research work will be premised on Representation Theory and Cultivation Theory. In particular, with relation to the representation and involvement of female journalists in Nigeria, representation theory offers a useful framework for comprehending the ways in which gender prejudice manifests itself in digital media practice. The main focus of representation theory is how different types of representation are used to establish and reinforce social identities including gender, race, and class. The term "representation" in the context of digital media refers to the ways that people and groups are portrayed in online spaces like social media, news websites, and other digital media channels. In the case of gender discrimination in digital media practice, Representation Theory helps to understand how limited representation and participation of female journalists in Nigeria reinforces gender stereotypes and biases. By examining the ways in which female journalists are portrayed in digital media, we can gain insight into the ways in which gender discrimination operates in these contexts.

Representation Theory also helps to understand how female journalists manage their own involvement and representation in media, for instance, female journalists may use deliberate self-representation or self-censorship to navigate gendered power relations in online media environments. Overall, representation theory offers a useful lens through which to investigate the intricate and varied ways that gender discrimination manifests itself in media practice, as well as how female journalists in Nigeria are both impacted by and responding to these dynamics.

Furthermore, Cultivation Theory explained that frequent exposure to media messages can alter our attitudes, convictions, and worldviews. This theory focuses on the issue of "Gender Discrimination in Media Practice, Female Journalists Representation and Participation in Nigeria" by addressing how media depiction of female journalists can affect how society views gender roles and equality.

Media representations of female journalists in Nigeria can reinforce preconceptions and gender disparities. Women may be perceived as less capable of handling "hard" news or holding positions of authority if they are repeatedly portrayed as inferior to their male colleagues or restricted to covering just specific "feminine" issues, for instance. The theory also contends that repeated exposure to these media messages can result in the development of attitudes and beliefs consistent with how gender roles are portrayed in the media. This may have negative effects in the real world, such as less opportunities for women in the journalism industry or a wider culture of prejudice against women. Cultivation Theory would therefore aid our understanding of how media portrayals of female journalists in Nigeria reinforces gender prejudice and contribute to it, as well as how media professionals can work to promote more inclusive and equitable representations of women in journalism.

RESEARCH METHOD

The term "research methods" refers to the organized processes, strategies, and equipment that are employed by researchers to gather and process data in order to provide new insights and understandings about a certain event or subject. Textual analysis was used by the researcher in addressing four aims on which the work is premised, this study will present four various academic papers for examination.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Nature Of Gender Discrimination Against Female Digital Media Journalists

For the purpose of this study, the scholarly research topic "Journalism as A Profession: The Challenges of Women in a Discriminatory Society" has been purposefully selected to address the first research goal, which is to determine the degree and nature of gender discrimination against female journalists in the practice of digital media. The researcher (Ogundoyin, 2020) looks at the difficulties women encounter in the media industry, particularly in a patriarchal environment. It was also discovered that female journalists face varieties of hurdles, from verbal and sexual harassment to private issues like divorce and limited family time.

Furthermore, when compared to their male counterparts in the industry, some women are restricted to hosting fewer challenging programs. In order to show the many forms of discrimination that female journalists experience, such as gender-based wage discrepancies, constrained chances for career progression, and sexual harassment, the study draws on previous research as well as personal testimonies. The study also examines how gender preconceptions and cultural prejudices affect women's capacity for reporting on specific subjects, such as politics and sports. The study combined survey research and interview techniques to assess data from 120 female journalists that work for Nigerian media outlets. A questionnaire was given to the participants, who were chosen through purposeful sampling. In addition, four senior women journalists who have a wealth of professional experience were interviewed. Two television stations and two radio stations made up the four electronic media stations that were the subject of the study.

According to the argument, 58 respondents (48.3%) said they anchored women empowerment programs, fashion, and entertainment, while 62 respondents (51.7%) said they anchored news reporting. Furthermore, 26 respondents (21.7%) mentioned anchoring sporting events. These findings imply that whereas hard news shows are often handed to their male counterparts, women are frequently chosen to anchor those that are conventionally viewed as more feminine. In addition, there are much fewer women anchoring sports programs than other programs they are tasked with.

According to 45 (37.5%) respondents, sexual harassment is a big personal difficulty for female journalists. Cultural and religious restrictions, on the other hand, were the least mentioned difficulty, mentioned by only 20.0% of respondents. Sexual harassment implies that it can seriously impair female journalists' capacity to work unapologetically and passionately. The study, which looked at how women journalists' careers in journalism affected their personal lives, found that 46 people (38.6%) were unable to spend quality time with their children, 44 (36.7%) had frequent arguments with their partners, 43 (35.8%) were frequently late for work, and 16 (13.3%) had been accused of being unfaithful by their partners. These findings imply that the obligations of their jobs may prevent them from having enough time to spend with their families, which could harm their relationships and reduce their productivity at work. This research supports the findings of Wescott (2019) and Mendes et al.(2018) that attacks on female journalists for their work and gender place a double burden on them.

The study investigated how women's careers as journalists impacted their family lives, and the findings are consistent with Chambers et al.'s (2004) report which suggests that women in various media fields frequently encounter obstacles to holding leadership or professional positions due to worries about the effects on their families. Additionally, some women might find it difficult to strike a balance between their professional and personal obligations, which would impair their productivity. The study comes to the conclusion that women journalists face threats to their life and family not just in Nigeria but around the world as well. These threats

include abuse, cyberbullying, cybersexism, marital issues like divorce, not spending enough time with partners and kids, and not attending as many familyevents. These challenges are inherent in the work and have stigmatized some female journalists. Media companies may, however, play a critical role in helping them by doing away with sexual stereotypes and providing women journalists a chance to flourish. This may entail allowing them to spend more time with their family and providing them difficult tasks that will help them feel more confident and help them succeed in their line of work.

According to Ferrier (2018), online abuse is more common than physical harassment. The majority of threats that female journalists receive on Twitter, Facebook, and other online platformsare sexist in nature and intended to frighten or defame the female journalist. The derogatory remarks cast doubt on women's intellectual integrity and professional qualifications. UNESCO (2017), added that monitoring and stalking, posting personal information, trolling, smearing, defamation or disparagement, and viral hatred are the most common types of online violence against women journalists and media professionals. Some of this cyberbullying may also take the form of personal attacks in the form of online comments, threatening emails, or threatening remarks on social networking sites (Koirala, 2020). It is clear that, although the internet is a valuable resource for female journalists to gather and share information, it is also frequently employed for other negative purposes, such as intimidation, cyberbullying, and public humiliation (Koirala, 2020).

Factors Influencing Discrimination against Female Journalists in Nigerian Digital Media Space

The article "Situational Analysis of Gender Inequality in Journalism Practice in Nigeria" by Osazee-Odia, Nwokoro from 2021 examines gender inequality in Nigerian journalism practice. The study discovers that women in the industry experience a variety of difficulties, including discrimination, sexual harassment, and unequal compensation, based on a review of the literature and interviews with female journalists.

These difficulties contribute to the gender gap in newsrooms, where males predominate in leadership roles and in the coverage of particular subjects. Additionally, it implies that there is discrimination based on gender in journalism practices and the recruiting process, with female journalists being the main targets of such prejudice. The study also sheds light on the patriarchal beliefs that contribute to the preference for male graduates over female graduates. The weighted mean scores of 3.3 for NTA, 3.3 for DBS, and 3.2 for Pointer Newspaper demonstrate that the study clearly favours male graduate journalists over their female counterparts. These results can point to cultural or patriarchal biases against women working in the media. Women's non-competitive status in comparison to men may also be influenced by unfavourable stereotypes of them as sex objects, passive, and dependant.

According to McQuail (2005) and Abdelmogeth and Mossal (2012), unconscious prejudices, such as those mentioned by Wood (1995) and Pavlou and Christiana (2018), may also contribute to the belief that women are unable to perform at the same level as males in the workplace. Furthermore, Martin and Barnard's (2013) study suggests that men may be defending their status quo and that there are deliberate biases against women in contexts where men predominate. This suggests that women's gender roles may be illusory. The research of Safa and Akter (2015) and Loboet al. (2012) lends more credence to these conclusions.

The news media also displayed gender bias in leadership positions and decision-making, with the glass ceiling serving as a substantial barrier for women seeking career progression. This supports Haim's (2021) report, which contends that gendered social roles have an impact on the proper behaviour of both male and female journalists. According to earlier studies, when journalists write about subjects that challenge gender norms, the reliability of their sources and the message of their work may suffer. Several factors, such as the

following, can affect gender discrimination against female journalists in Nigerian digital media practice: Stereotypes and biases; Long-standing societal conventions and stereotypes can have a negative effect on how people view and treat female journalists at work. Women are frequently portrayed as emotional, unable to handle pressure, or incapable of making wise decisions, which might restrict their possibilities for progress.

Effect of Gender Bias on Women Journalists in Nigeria's Digital Media Industry

Julie et al's, (2021) study "The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists" examines the rising trend of online violence and harassment directed towards women journalists, which has become a major issue in recent years. The report presents findings from a global survey of women journalists and experts, which highlights the severity of online violence and its impact on women journalists, including mental health impacts, self-censorship, and leaving the profession altogether. The study identifies trends in online violence, such as coordinated attacks, sexualized harassment, and the use of disinformation to target women journalists. The purpose of the report was to raise awareness on the issue and to provide recommendations to media organizations, governments, and tech companies on how to address and prevent online violence against women journalists.

This agrees with Onyinchechi and Oguchi (2023) study which suggests that 80% of female journalists interviewed concur that they have experienced online harassment, particularly in the form of intimidating messages, name-calling, rape threats, and death threats. These results concur with UNESCO (2020), who found out that Facebook is the least secure of the top five websites, and that more women journalists have suffered online harassment. Akinsola (2021), also reveals that women journalists face various forms of gender bias in the industry, including unequal pay, fewer opportunities for career advancement, and limited access to decision-making positions.

The study also found that the gender bias in the industry is perpetuated by patriarchal societal norms and values, as well as the digital media industry's male-dominated culture. These biases negatively affect women journalists' career progression, job satisfaction, and mental health. The study recommends that media organizations should implement policies and strategies that address gender bias in the industry and create a more inclusive and equitable work environment for women journalists.

Notably also, Adewumi (2020) study revealed that there is a significant gender bias in digital journalism in Nigeria, with female sources and perspectives being underrepresented in news coverage. Furthermore, the study finds that the gender bias perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces gender inequality in Nigerian society. Odetokun, (2021) findings revealed that gender bias is prevalent in Nigeria's digital newsrooms, as female journalists reported experiencing various forms of discrimination, including unequal pay, lack of promotion opportunities, and sexual harassment. The study highlights the need for news organizations to adopt policies and practices that promote gender equality and create a safe and supportive working environment for female journalists.

Ways In Which Women Journalists in Nigeria Tackle Gender Bias in Digital Media Practice

Female journalist are often faced with gender bias in media practice (Dapoet, 2022). Ifeoma (2020) in her work "Navigating Gendered Spaces: Women Journalists' Strategies in Challenging Gender Bias in Nigerian Newsrooms". In the study, the researcher studied 20 female journalists working in Nigeria's digital media industry and identified several strategies they use to tackle gender bias. These strategies include: media organizations and policymakers should take concrete steps to address these challenges and promote gender equality in the workplace. Specifically, the study recommends the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, training programs for journalists on gender

sensitivity, and the creation of support networks for female journalists in Plateau State.

PARADIGMATIC DISCUSSION

Gender discrimination against women journalists in digital media in Nigeria manifests in various forms. One of the most prevalent forms of discrimination is sexual harassment, which can come from male colleagues or superiors. Sexual harassment can create a hostile work environment and can leave women feeling unsafe, unsupported, and unable to do their jobs effectively. Verbal abuse is another form of discrimination that women journalists face in digital media. This type of abuse can take the form of belittling comments, name-calling, or harsh criticism. It can also lead to self-doubt, anxiety, and depression, which can have a detrimental impact on the mental health and well-being of women journalists.

Online harassment is also a significant issue that women journalists face in the digital media industry. The anonymity of the internet makes it easier for individuals to harass, threaten, or bully women journalists, particularly those who express their opinions on sensitive topics. This type of harassment can have a significant impact on a woman's professional and personal life, and can even force some to leave the industry altogether.

Gender-based pay disparities are another issue that women journalists face in digital media. Despite equal qualifications and experience, women journalists are often paid less than their male counterparts, which perpetuates gender inequality in the industry.

Limited career advancement opportunities are also a significant challenge for women journalists in digital media. Women are often passed over for promotions, leadership roles, and other career advancement opportunities, which can lead to frustration, low morale, and a lack of motivation.

Divorce and non-availability to the needs of the family are also problems that women journalists face in digital media. The long and unpredictable hours that come with the job can put a strain on personal relationships, making it difficult for women to balance their personal and professional lives.

In conclusion, gender discrimination against women journalists in digital media takes many forms, and it is a problem that needs to be addressed urgently. The industry must take proactive steps to promote gender equality, including the implementation of policies and practices that support women's career advancement, and the establishment of safe and supportive work environments free from discrimination and harassment.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Nigerian female journalists' participation and representation concludes that there is gender inequality in the use of digital media. Despite the expanding digital landscape and easier access to online platforms, female journalists continue to confront a number of obstacles that prevent their full involvement and equal representation in the field. The study emphasizes how gender stereotypes, cultural biases, and patriarchal conventions still have an impact on how female journalists are treated in Nigeria's digital media environment. These biases frequently leave women with less opportunity to hold leadership positions, insufficient representation in decision-making processes, and low visibility in newsrooms.

Female journalists are also seriously threatened by internet abuse and cyberbullying, which prevents them from freely expressing their thoughts and opinions. Due to this, there are less diverse voices and viewpoints in Nigeria's digital media arena, which hinders their professional development. A multifaceted strategy is needed to address gender discrimination in the use of digital media. First and foremost, media companies should have policies and procedures in place that advance gender equality, such as equal pay, equitable promotion chances, and the creation of safe places to address abuse and harassment.

Also, there is a need to strengthen media literacy initiatives and awareness efforts to combat pervasive biases and stereotypes and promote a

more welcoming and equal digital media landscape. Society may gain from a wider variety of viewpoints and experiences by encouraging diverse representation and highlighting the voices of female journalists.

Government agencies, civil society groups, and media industry associations—must work together to foster an environment that encourages female journalists and guarantees their equal participation. This could entail offering mentoring and training programs, fighting for legislative changes, and keeping an eye out for and addressing prejudice incidents.

Nigeria should unleash the full potential of its female journalists and create a more inclusive and vibrant media ecosystem by tearing down gender barriers and supporting a digital media environment that values diversity. Realizing gender equality in the digital media is not only an issue of justice and fairness; it is also a vital step in creating a democratic society that recognizes various points of view and fosters societal advancement.

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