# Media Influence on Women's Lifestyle: A Pathological Analysis

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

**Article type:**
*Commentary Article*

A B S T R A C T

In the current era, with the emergence of new communication and information technologies and new media, we are witnessing profound changes in the lifestyle and culture of different societies, and today, the media are an indispensable part of human life. Media serve as a conduit for transmitting the heritage and culture of past generations to future ones and are considered one of the primary tools of cultural imperialism against other cultures, and change and evolution in various cultures can be shaped through the media. Alongside this, in the present century, we are witnessing fundamental changes in various perspectives and discourses regarding women. Nowadays, women play an influential role in societies, and any changes in women's thinking, attitudes, and behavior lead to changes in family culture and subsequently in societal culture. Therefore, we are witnessing changes in women's lifestyle in society are not unaffected by media content and messages. Researchers in the field of media and communication believe that media contribute to the process of identity formation and meaning-making, and they influence the behavioral patterns, social conduct, and public norms in society. Thus, media significantly contribute to shaping the intellectual and theoretical system of influential individuals, and ultimately, it is this intellectual system that determines the foundations of lifestyle. This article delves into the pathological analysis of the impact of media on women's lifestyle.
*Keywords: Media, Women, Society, Lifestyle, Pathological Analysis.*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, due to the rapid growth of mass communication tools, the face of the world is undergoing transformation and continuous change. This rapid advancement has ushered in a new chapter in the lives of individuals, as these mass communication tools exert control over all aspects of people's lives, including political, economic, cultural, and social domains, across the globe. Nowadays, modern communication technologies have provided individuals with the opportunity to directly connect with others, become aware of each other's thoughts and perspectives, and influence one another without intermediaries. Indeed, media have become integrated into the social lives of humans and act in line with their desires and motivations. For instance, money serves as a social

medium, and fashion, cosmetics, etc., influence behavior. It can boldly be stated that in the present age, mass communication tools, including media, are among the basic and daily needs of people, to the extent that their elimination from life is unavoidable. Nevertheless, media operate in the unconscious realm of humans and act in a suggestive manner, thus being capable of shaping the desired lifestyle and cultural norms within society over time (Parsakia & Rostami, 2023; Parsakia, Rostami, & Saadati, 2023). Women are one of the pillars of the family and hold a significant role and position within this institution. Therefore, the rise or fall of any society depends on how women are positioned socially and individually. On the other hand, media are the most complex tools for instilling thoughts and the most efficient means for dominating the tranquility of societies (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015). In recent decades, with the rapid growth of communication technology, the complexity and effectiveness of these tools have increased daily. The issue of media pathology as one of the most fundamental topics discussed in societies in recent years has been debated and examined from various perspectives (Parsakia, Rostami, et al., 2023). However, one of the most important aspects of this discussion, namely the influence of women and media in shaping human societies, has received less attention, as different societies' responses to the issue of women vary, and naturally, in many of them, due to the lack of a proper status and independent identity for women, there seems to be no need to discuss such matters openly, which leads to overt contradictions.

## 2. Concept of Gender

Concept of Gender Kimball believes that gender has a broader concept and refers to the psychological characteristics and social classifications formed in human culture. Anna Oakley also believes that gender is a set of attributes and behaviors attributed to femininity or masculinity, which have been culturally formed (Souza et al., 2023).

## 3. Media

It may be very easy to say that any medium that conveys a message is media, but this simplification cannot show the various dimensions of the media. Even if we say that radio, television, print media, books, cinema, and even the internet are media, we are still neglecting part of this concept, especially our native, traditional, and even Islamic culture. Therefore, we define media as follows: "Media is a living

entity that transfers a message from a sender to a receiver (audience)" (Goyeneche, 2023; T & Mathew, 2022; Tedjawidjaja & Christanti, 2022). This message transmission occurs exactly according to the process described in the definition of communication. If we look at the media in this way, the following results are inevitable: a) Media possess all the characteristics of living beings and go beyond mere communication and message transmission to become message creators. This is where: b) According to this view, the broadcast product of a medium becomes a medium itself. If McLuhan said, "We say that these two always become a continuous stream and form a circle that wherever one ends, it starts from the same point as the other." c) According to this definition, the following are media, and based on the characteristics of today's world, they are all mass media: "Radio, television, print media, books, cinema, personal computers, video tape, CD and DVD, the internet, web pages, radio blogs, photo blogs, video blogs, podcasts, mobile phones, tribune, pulpit, mihrab, mausoleum, mosque, and minaret with its call to prayer, a place in Iranian and Islamic culture. Poster, film, cartoon, animation, painting, billboard, symbol, wall writing, game" (Norouzi et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2022; Parsakia, Rostami, & Saadati, 2023).

## 4. Communication

The term "communications" is commonly used in the plural form to refer to the means and methods involved in the transmission of thoughts, news, and human behaviors from one person to another. This includes various types of communications, such as a newspaper, a radio or television organization, a press institution, a film company, and a printing house (Kia, 2012, p. 54).

## 5. Different Types of Lifestyles

One way to achieve a better understanding of the concept of lifestyle from various scholars' perspectives is to examine the elements and components they enumerate for lifestyle or utilize them as indicators in their research. The elements mentioned by Zimmel, Weber, and Blumer in their works include: dietary habits, clothing styles, adherence to fashion trends, housing type (architectural decoration and furnishings), modes of transportation, leisure activities, recreational activities, playful behaviors, and the like. In the past two decades, social scientists have generally presented multiple indicators for lifestyle (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015;

Niazi & Karkonannasrabadi, 2013). They consider lifestyle to include the following:

Consumption patterns and status symbols: housing, automobiles, mobile phones, decorations, and adornments, outward appearance.

Behavioral patterns: leisure activities, recreation, sports, expression, accent, speech, grooming habits.

Cultural symbols: indigenous, local, national, transnational symbols, traditional symbols, modern symbols.

Social roles: occupation-based roles, personal roles, social roles, familial and kinship roles.

Social values: collectivism and individualism, future orientation and past orientation, individual and collective work, specialization, wealth and possessions, security and comfort, spiritualism, materialism, power, happiness and well-being, dignity and respect, legalism (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015).

In addition to determining the components and indicators of lifestyle over the past few decades, the use of lifestyle questionnaires in published research has seen tremendous growth (Jansen, 2011). Various fields for analyzing lifestyle in different studies have been determined based on the research topic. Both domestic and international research on lifestyle is predominantly observed in areas related to health and body management, musical preferences, and most importantly, leisure activities, which have been assigned significant importance in the context of leisure and health-related behaviors (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015). In addition to foreign research in this field, an examination of research conducted on lifestyle in Iran reveals various types and measures. For example, Fazeli has extracted the following indicators from conducted research: cultural consumption, leisure activities, and scattered indicators, which include body management, consumption patterns, and the like. Although cultural consumption itself can be part of leisure activities, not every leisure activity is cultural consumption. Some leisure activities, considered as indicators of lifestyle, include sports, socializing with friends, body management (referring to various dressing habits, hair styling, and the use of accessories).

## 6.    The Role of Media Literacy

Media literacy is a form of skill-based understanding that allows distinguishing between different types of media, discerning and identifying various media productions. The primary goal of media literacy may be to enable individuals to recognize the social justice aspect of media content as a final product. Media literacy involves a blend of effective media utilization techniques and gaining insight and understanding to distinguish media from each other. In fact, when a point of conflict with a media source is reached, media literacy can prevent disconnection from the media, recommending engagement with various media and transforming a one-way and reactive relationship into a more active one. Media should portray a real image of empowered and entrepreneurial women (Forghani & Khodamoradi, 2019; Rohmiyati & Irhandayaningsih, 2018). Conversely, popular magazines do not focus much on the identity of women. Popular magazines do not pay attention to the religious and national identity of women. 20 to 40 percent of advertisements in these magazines consist of commercial advertisements. The published content in these magazines does not provide new information to the reader. These characteristics lead magazines towards sensationalism. The absence of feminist discourse in the representation of women's roles in cultural policymaking and communication strategies in our media is evident. If there are policies, they lack enforcement... The media does not emphasize the role of women in conveying national and religious values in the media. The media can prevent consumerism and fashionism and promote Iranian lifestyle. The media should portray a real image of empowered and knowledgeable women, managers, and entrepreneurs and create opportunities for girls to accept their social and familial roles. The media should represent the rights and responsibilities of women and men relative to each other. The media should avoid contradictions regarding women's rights in advertisements. The number of female journalists in our country is high, but they are not professionals and do not have the necessary skills (Bahadorikhosroshahi & Bargi, 2018; Forghani & Khodamoradi, 2019; Hossein & Reza, 2006; Soltani et al., 2017).

## 7.    Media and Women's Participatory Education

Media agencies can help; they can teach women life skills of participation and presence and empower women. Due to discrepancies, gender disparities exist in Iran, and we see the growth of girls in universities. But alongside this, we witness that these educated girls face a society that does not provide them with equal job opportunities and suitable positions. These have caused gaps and discrepancies. Social communications for women are facilitated through excellent public relations and fast internet, and they can help create

large social networks. Sharing experiences and disseminating findings and knowledge in cyberspace is the driving force and essence of social networks. Identity is also a key feature of social network evolution. In email and blogs, one can use a fictional and virtual identity, but in social networks, identities become real again. The network society leads individuals towards a kind of life in which they can contribute individually or collectively in creating something new and help themselves and others in the co-creation process (Hossein & Reza, 2006; Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015; Rasuli, 2003).

## 8.    Media and Female Poverty

In today's world, we are faced with female poverty, and our various political, social, and media arenas are deprived of female perspectives. We are now seriously confronted with the lack of a female perspective, including compassion, color, and spiritual diversity, in the fields of global and national management and politics, and the women who do exist have either forgotten their emotions or been marginalized, and there is no place for humane, emotional, and inspirational views in management. Our poverty problem is also very determinative in the field of information and journalism because these media can see many issues with an emotional view while this female poverty is visible in the global and national arenas (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015; Niazi & Karkonannasrabadi, 2013; Patel & Volgman, 2021; Rowe & Silva, 2023).

## 9.    Media and Women's Value Dimensions

Examining the value dimensions of women in the media, today's duties of women in cinema and television screens and analyzing the image of women in the media by comparing their real position in society with media perspectives are very important. Western cinemas in the 1940s portrayed a very harsh image of women and presented women as mere playthings on the cinema screen. Iranian cinema and television women, from various perspectives, observe ethical issues and Islamic principles better than Western cinemas, and in this regard, Iranian cinema cannot be compared to Western cinemas. The quantitative and qualitative growth of women's participation in cultural and media fields is evidence of the favorable conditions resulting from the unparalleled achievements of the Cultural Revolution. Women's entry into radio and television and their commendable activities in these fields have drawn attention to the existing potential and talents of this segment of society. However, the lack of programmatic value dimensions of women has created a dehumanizing presence (Goyeneche, 2023; Parsakia & Rostami, 2023; Parsakia, Rostami, et al., 2023).

## 10.    The Impact of Media on Women's Lifestyle

In Iranian society, characterized by its Iranian and Islamic traits, women have always held specific roles. During pivotal moments in Iranian history and the course of the Islamic Revolution's triumph, women have played crucial roles and have been influential figures in society, primarily as mothers and wives.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a new discourse of Islamic revolution emerged, presenting a new style of religious life while rejecting both Eastern and Western discourses globally. This discourse, subjected to media and cultural onslaughts since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, has brought about changes in the lifestyle of Iranian women.

Undoubtedly, the changes observed in body management, consumption patterns, and leisure activities, in short, the lifestyle of women in society, are not unaffected by media content and messages. Researchers in the field of media and communication believe that media aid in the process of identity formation and sense-making, influencing societal behaviors, social conduct, and public tastes. Thus, media significantly contribute to shaping individuals' cognitive and ideological systems, ultimately determining lifestyle paradigms (Khajenuri & Soroush, 2015; Niazi & Karkonannasrabadi, 2013; Norouzi et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2022; Soltani et al., 2017).

Alongside, media, particularly visual media and virtual platforms, continually educate on lifestyle. They dictate how people spend their leisure time, arrange their homes, conduct conversations, choose travel destinations, determine relationship types, clothing styles, interpersonal dialogues, personal grooming, hobbies, and many other aspects, inducing individuals to adopt a particular lifestyle different from our national culture (Forghani & Khodamoradi, 2019; Patel & Volgman, 2021; Rohmiyati & Irhandayaningsih, 2018).

In the contemporary world, these media determine what constitutes a beautiful body, what body does not meet the standards of aesthetic beauty, which style of dressing is desirable and ideal, and which one is outdated and should be discarded. A significant shift in people's attitudes toward various aspects of body beauty, which almost takes a

Western form, and regardless of its goodness or badness, almost signifies globalization, comes to mind due to media influence. Among these, media management operates at three levels: media management, management over media, and content and meaning management, which is extraordinarily important. In media management, authorities, through enacting laws, macro policies, and guidelines, steer media trends. In this regard, the formulation of laws and policies concerning female audiences is of paramount importance. Determining what image of Iranian Muslim women should be promoted and propagated by Iranian media, along with the values and roles associated with it, is how managers of media direct media trends. They adhere to these in programming and project approval, providing employees with necessary knowledge and skills in this regard, representing them in the main policy directions, and ultimately focusing on content and meanings, which have the most significant impact on audiences. To what extent media managers pay attention to the contents and meanings produced in programs, alongside visual attractiveness to attract audience attention, is noteworthy (Norouzi et al., 2022; Parsakia & Rostami, 2023; Parsakia, Rostami, et al., 2023; Rasuli, 2003).

In Iran, television promotes two types of consumer culture: first, a vast volume of programs on the national broadcasting network devoted to commercial advertising. The direct message of these advertisements emphasizes increasing consumption and diversity. Second, it presents exemplary patterns where the family's level of affluence and consumption exceeds that of society, intensifying the desire for consumption and its value. For example, most TV series and programs in Iran depict the urban affluent lifestyle and associated elements. The type of housing, locations used in series, athletes' vehicles, and travelers' ...and the representation made by celebrities are among them.

The virtual space, with a brief look at social networks, helps us understand that the presence of young girls and women on social networks is increasing, and women play a role as creators in the virtual space. Profile pictures and videos, attire in photos, joining multiple virtual pages, and... clearly indicate a kind of change in the traditional lifestyle of women and young girls in various dimensions. Interaction styles in virtual space are drastically different from the real world, and a pattern is observed among users. There are masses and elites, users who act as influencers will have the most followers, and in most cases, their lifestyles are imitated, seen as a fashion in society, and imitated by the masses. Alongside, interaction on social networks has shifted to face-to-face relationships, taking place through chatting, commenting, and liking among users. Friendships, marriages, different social groups are formed from these same social networks and materialize in the real world. Consumption norms, which have almost taken on a Western form and separated from good or bad, almost imply globalization.

## 11. Conclusion

In fact, what we have witnessed with the onset of the Industrial Revolution is that humanity has faced tremendous and profound transformations with unprecedented growth and development, especially with the expansion and advancement of media, particularly modern communication and information technologies, over the past half-century, usurping the pace and expansion of other technological domains throughout history. It has become so intertwined with the lives of people at various points on the globe that today, discussions about human existence and lifestyle are incomplete without considering the media. On one hand, what is apparent is that lifestyle, among other matters, is more pronounced in modern consumer societies, especially in large cities, as conditions there afford individuals more opportunities for making choices. Moreover, the realization of these choices is more feasible in larger cities. In other words, in large cities, individuals can more freely deviate from traditional constraints and opt for modern and diverse choices, while also having better and greater access to resources for realizing their choices.

Overall, based on the findings of this research regarding the relationship between lifestyle and its association with various media, there is a meaningful relationship. However, it should be noted that not all types of media have a meaningful relationship with all types of lifestyles; rather, each type of media influences several categories of lifestyles.

Since every society needs to preserve its values, foster its growth, and transmit them to future generations, it requires presenting an appropriate lifestyle model consistent with its culture. Therefore, considering the cultural and religious characteristics of our society, what needs attention is presenting an Iranian Islamic model that encompasses a particular type of lifestyle aligned with the cultural values specific to our society. It should be noted that for this model to be effective in society, awareness of its various characteristics is necessary, and with a full understanding of its dimensions, efforts should be made to promote and

expand it. Additionally, for this model to be attractive and maximally accepted by individuals in society, appropriate alternatives should be considered by employing creativity and creating suitable cultural contexts, so that individuals enthusiastically and willingly adopt it.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

## Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

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