

Reviewing the Women Objectification in Media and its Impacts

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Women objectification in mass media has long been recognized as a major issue. Many feminist scholars have raised voice against it as a basic social and psychological issue particularly against women. Notably, the relevant phenomenon is thought-provoking to the impacts attributed to objectifying women. Several feminist scholars have discussed and highlighted women objectification requiring critical consideration. This article investigates women's objectification in music videos under Nussbaum's perspective of objectification.

Methodology: The researchers conducted a review of the literature. Through analysis of various music videos, the study examines the ways in which women are depicted and the impact of these depictions on societal perceptions of gender and sexuality.

Findings: The study found that women are frequently objectified in media content and that this objectification can negatively affect how women are perceived and treated in society.

Conclusion: The article concluded by calling for greater awareness of the issue and a more responsible and respectful representation of women in music videos.

Keywords: Gender Stereotypes, Inequality, Mass Media, Sexual Aggression, Women Objectification.

Introduction

Women objectification in media refers to the portrayal of women in a way that emphasizes their physical attributes and reduces them to objects of sexual desire (Berberick, 2010; Kellie et al., 2019). This can include showing women in revealing clothing, emphasizing their body parts, and depicting them in submissive or passive roles (Nussbaum, 1995). This type of representation can have a negative impact on how women are perceived and treated in society, as it reinforces harmful stereotypes and perpetuates the idea that women are primarily valuable for their physical appearance (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). The women objectification in media is a prevalent issue that has been widely criticized by feminist groups and other advocates for women's rights. Some argue that the objectification in music videos contributes to a culture that objectifies and sexualizes women and can lead to more negative attitudes and behaviours towards women (Nussbaum, 1995). On the other hand, some argue that media content is just a form of

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entertainment and that the sexualization of women can be empowering for women (Pennell & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). Feminists argue that the objectification is a form of oppression and reinforces patriarchal ideas that women are inferior to men and exist primarily for men's pleasure and consumption (Dines & Humez, 2011). They argue that objectifying women in this way reduces them to objects that can be used, consumed, and discarded rather than recognizing them as full human beings with their own thoughts, opinion, desires, and emotions (Erchull & Liss, 2013). Furthermore, feminist scholars have also argued that the objectification of women in media can harm women's representation in the public sphere, as it reinforces the idea that women are not suitable for leadership roles or other positions of power (Wong & McCullough, 2021; Orly & Shnabel, 2019; Smith et al., 2018).

Feminists also argue that the objectification in media contributes to the broader societal problem of gender inequality (Nussbaum, 1995). This can include the sexualization of girls and women, the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes, and the justification of sexual violence and harassment (RM Calogero, 2012; R. Calogero et al., 2011). Additionally, feminists argue that the objectification in music videos and other media forms can harm women's self-esteem and body image. The constant bombardment of images of thin, conventionally attractive women in music videos can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth, particularly for women and girls who do not conform to these narrow beauty standards (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Thus, feminists argue that objectification perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces patriarchal ideas of women as inferior and existing for men's pleasure and consumption, contributing to broader societal problems of gender inequality and harming women's self-esteem and body image (Happer & Philo, 2013). Talking about the women objectification in the media, some common types of objections may include showing women in sexually suggestive poses or clothing, such as tight or revealing outfits, lingerie, or bikini (Loughnan & Pacelli, 2014). Depicting women as passive or submissive, often in the presence of men who are dominant or in control (Yao et al., 2010). Emphasizing certain body parts such as legs, buttocks, or cleavage (Nadal, 2017). Showing women as only decorative or ornamental, without any real agency or purpose in the video other than to be looked at (Guizzo et al., 2017). Using women as props or accessories in the video rather than as active participants (Tipler & Ruscher, 2019). Sexualizing women in a way that is not directly related to the lyrics or theme of the song (Kistler & Lee, 2010). It is important to note that objectification can take many forms and can be subtle or overt. It is also important to note that this is not an exhaustive list, and there are many other ways that women can be objectified in music videos.

Methodology

According to Daniels et al., (2020), the concept of "objectification" provides a framework to understand the experience of being a woman in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body. It is an important perspective in feminist and counselling psychology, which aims to understand the ways that sexual objectification impacts women's lives and the problems they bring to therapy, as well as how they cope with and resist these experiences. Additionally, it emphasizes the examination of issues of diversity and oppression under patriarchy at both interpersonal and societal levels and advocates for social justice for marginalized women and communities. This study is based on the applied descriptive review approach as the focus was to examine the literature witnessing women objectification in media and its impacts under Martha Nussbaum's perspective (Loeb et al., 2017). Although several studies are witnessing this concern, conducting their review, synthesizing results, and witnessing under Nussbaum's perspective adds value to current research. The researcher has reviewed Martha Nussbaum's conceptualization of "Objectification" (Nussbaum, 1995) and further its extension based on Langton's work (Langton, 2009). Additionally, the studies published from 2015 to 2020 are cited that further indicate the objectification as a prevalent issue, causing serious social and psychological concerns for society in general and women in particular. Notably, (Al-Shibly et al., 2019) consider applied descriptive studies based on a pragmatic approach as the literature review would further lead the readers to realistic solutions.

Martha Nussbaum's Conceptualization of Women Objectification

Martha Nussbaum is a philosopher who has written extensively about the objectification and its negative effects on society (Nussbaum, 1995). Notably, the conceptual of objectification was further theorized by (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) as they provided with the framework used to understand the experience of being a woman in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body. It is an important perspective in feminist and counselling psychology, which aims to understand the ways that sexual objectification impacts women's lives and the problems they bring to therapy, as well as how they cope with and resist these experiences. Additionally, it emphasizes the examination of issues of diversity and oppression under patriarchy at both interpersonal and societal levels and advocates for social justice for marginalized women and communities.

Martha Nussbaum proposed seven different types of her objectification based on her theory that are further studies, tested, and validated in the later literature. Nussbaum's theory of objectification centers around the idea that when individuals are objectified, they are reduced to a mere instrument or object for the use of others (Papadaki, 2021). Papadaki, (2021) argued that the Nussbaum's concept of "Objectification" is inspired by Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, particularly idea of the "dignity" of human beings. Kant believed that all human beings have inherent worth or "dignity" simply by being human and that this dignity must be respected in all interactions with others. They argued that treating someone as a mere means to an end, rather than as an end in themselves, violates their dignity. Nussbaum applies this idea to how women are treated in society, arguing that when women are objectified and reduced to their physical appearance, they are being treated as a mere means to an end (for example, as objects of sexual desire or as decorative accessories) rather than as ends in themselves (Nussbaum, 1995).

Nussbaum argues that objectification can have several negative effects on individuals, including a lack of self-respect and autonomy and a distorted sense of what is valuable in human beings (Berkhout, 2008). Additionally, she posits that objectification can be a source of social injustice, particularly about women, as it can be used to justify discrimination and mistreatment. Nussbaum argues that objectification occurs when a person is reduced to a mere instrument or object for the use of others (Sáez et al., 2019). This can happen in many ways, but one common example is when women are reduced to their physical appearance and sexual attractiveness (Singh, 1993). According to Nussbaum, this objectification can lead to various negative consequences, including a lack of self-respect and autonomy and a distorted sense of what is valuable in human beings. Additionally, she argues that objectification can be a source of social injustice, particularly about women, as it can be used to justify discrimination and mistreatment (Sáez et al., 2019). Nussbaum argues that the women objectification has serious consequences for society, including perpetuating harmful stereotypes, undermining women's political and economic rights, and contributing to violence against women (McGlynn, 2019). Later in 2009, Rae Langton (Langton, 2009) further updated and added some more types of objectifications. Their work was based on Nussbaum's perspective of objectification, yet Langton argues that Nussbaum's theory primarily focuses on the negative effects of objectification on individuals but needs to fully address the issue of power and its role in objectification (Maitra, 2013). Langton thus, suggests that objectification should be understood as a form of speech act that can be used to silence and subjugate individuals, especially women. Langton argues that these forms of objectification are particularly harmful because they affect individuals individually and reinforce and perpetuate societal structures of oppression and inequality (Cahill, 2010). Overall, Langton's work emphasizes the importance of understanding the power dynamics in objectification and the role that objectifying language and imagery can play in perpetuating societal injustices (Haslanger, 2017).

Objectification in Media- Review of Recent Literature

An empirical study by Seabrook et al., (2019) focused on "how the women objectification is related to their body image and self-objectification." They found that the objectification is related to negative body image and self-objectification, which is linked with body shame, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating. The study participants reported that they are more likely to engage in self-objectifying behaviours,

such as comparing their bodies to those of others and monitoring their physical appearance when they perceived themselves to be objectified by others. The research suggests that the women objectification is a pervasive problem that can have serious negative consequences for women's mental and physical health. It needs to be addressed through education and social change. Pacilli et al., (2017) argued that relationship between the women objectification and their sexual agency. The women objectification can limit their ability to assert themselves sexually and can lead to a negative consequence for women, such as reduced sexual satisfaction, increased risk of sexual coercion and assault, and negative body image. Pacilli and their colleagues suggested that the women objectification is a pervasive problem that is reinforced by societal norms and reinforced by the media. They also highlighted that the women objectification could be internalized, leading to self-objectification, where women view themselves as objects to be looked, judged, and evaluated regarding their physical appearance.

Bernard et al., (2018) indicated that exposure to sexually objectifying media, such as music videos, movies and advertisements, increases the tolerance towards sexual harassment of women. The women objectification in the media can contribute to a culture that is more tolerant of sexual harassment and may perpetuate gender inequality. A study conducted by Vandenbosch & van Oosten, (2017) examined the relationship between online pornography consumption and the sexual objectification of women. Additionally, the researchers investigated the role education about pornography, or "porn literacy," may play in reducing this effect. Data gathered from 1,947 individuals revealed a positive correlation between online pornography consumption and the sexual objectification of women. However, this correlation was weaker among participants who reported higher levels of porn literacy education.

Another important perspective on women objectification was raised by Tipler & Ruscher, (2019) as they examined the dehumanization of women in media by using animalistic metaphors. Findings indicated that when women are represented as animalistic entities, it can lead to a dehumanization of women, which can contribute to the justification of hostility and aggression towards them. These dehumanizing representations of women are reinforced by societal norms and reinforced by the media, highlighting the need for interventions to challenge these societal norms and promote a more holistic understanding of women. As noted by Kellie et al., (2019), objectifying women is like seeing them as lacking intelligence and decision-making abilities and undeserving of moral consideration. Research has shown that this objectification negatively affects objectified women, including an increased likelihood of experiencing sexually aggressive behaviour from men.

Loughnan et al., (2017) argued that objectification is a form of dehumanization, where women are reduced to their physical appearance and treated as if they are not fully human. They contended that objectification can lead to negative consequences for women, including reduced empathy and increased aggression towards women. Loughnan and their colleagues also suggested that objectification can be a self-fulfilling prophecy in that woman who internalizes the message that they are valued solely for their physical appearance may begin to engage in self-objectifying behaviours, such as obsessing over their appearance and sexualizing themselves. A study conducted by Ward et al., (2018) examined the relationship between media use, self-sexualization, and sexual agency among undergraduate women. Data obtained by surveying the young undergraduate-level women found that media use was associated with greater self-sexualization but that self-sexualization was not associated with greater sexual agency. It suggests that media use among undergraduate women is related to self-objectification, which does not necessarily imply a lack of sexual agency.

Likewise, Vasquez et al., (2018) examined the relationship between the objectification and cognitive functioning of women. They found that when women are objectified, they experience a cognitive load which impairs their cognitive performance on a task requiring working memory. They also found that this effect was more pronounced when the objectification was self-objectification, meaning when women objectified themselves. Overall, it was found that the objectification is a problem that can have serious negative consequences for women's cognitive functioning and may impede their ability to succeed in a wide range of tasks and activities. Vasquez and their colleagues also considered self-objectification

resulting in cognitive impairment due to objectification and the need for interventions to reduce the negative effects of objectification on women's cognitive functioning. Besides, Ward, (2016) witnessed that objectification causes a cognitive load which impairs their cognitive performance on a task requiring working memory. Ward argued that this effect is since objectification leads to self-objectification, where women also considered themselves as objects to be looked and judged by others.

Discussion

The objectification in media has been a widely studied topic in recent years (Rollero, 2013), with a growing body of research highlighting the negative impacts it can have on women's physical and mental health and their social and economic well-being. However, feminist scholars have long criticized the objectification of women in media, arguing that it contributes to a culture in which women are valued primarily for their physical appearance and sexual availability. According to feminist theorist Susan Brownmiller, objectification occurs when "a woman's body, parts of her body, or her sexual functions, are separated from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or things, for use by others" (Cahil, 2009). This objectification reinforces patriarchal values and power imbalances between men and women and can negatively affect women's self-esteem, body image, and sexual agency (Aubrey et al., 2011).

Feminist scholars have also argued that the objectification of women in media is harmful not only to women as individuals but also to society. For example, according to feminist media scholar Gail Dines, the proliferation of sexually objectifying images in media is linked to the normalization of sexual violence, as it "teaches men to see women as objects to be used and abused" (Dines, 2020). Here we can cite an example of propositions by Catherine Mackinnon who is a radical feminist and gave her stance on women objectification in pornography as a type of controversial media content (MacKinnon, 1989b). In her book *Feminism Unmodified*, Mackinnon argues that pornography objectifies and degrades women, perpetuating a culture of male domination and sexual violence. She also claims that pornography reinforces traditional gender roles, such as the idea that women are sexually passive, and men are sexually aggressive (MacKinnon, 1989a). Mackinnon further argued that pornography leads to increased sexual violence against women and is often used as an excuse to justify such violence. As such, she believes that pornography should be banned. In her views, Mackinnon argued that pornography is a form of sexual exploitation of women. She believes it objectifies and perpetuates the subjugation of women by reinforcing gender stereotypes. She argues that pornography is a form of gender-based violence and that its production and consumption should be illegal. She also believes that pornography contributes to the degradation of women in society and should be seen as a civil rights issue (MacKinnon et al., 1997).

Similarly, in this article we found that Nussbaum also emphasized that objectifying women and reducing them to their physical appearance is a violation of their dignity and a form of oppression that is reinforced by societal norms and media representation (Nussbaum, 1995). This objectification leads to negative self-perception and cognitive impairment. Nussbaum's ideas are based on the moral principle of human dignity, as put forward by Immanuel Kant, which states that treating someone as a mere means to an end is a violation of their inherent worth. The literature in this study also indicated that the objectification is a pervasive problem that is reinforced by societal norms and reinforced by the media. (Aubrey et al., 2011) argued that objectification is a form of oppression that contributes to the devaluation and marginalization of women in society. Aubrey stated that it can negatively affect women's physical and mental health and their social and economic well-being. Objectification is a multi-faceted phenomenon encompassing overt and subtle forms of sexual objectification, such as sexual harassment, sexual violence, and the women's portrayals as sexual objects in the mass media (Swami et al., 2010)

The representation of women in media as sexual objects or as objects of beauty can contribute to a culture that is more tolerant of sexual harassment and may perpetuate gender inequality (Wright & Tokunaga, 2016). Additionally, objectifying women in media can lead to negative body image, self-objectification, and disordered eating (Bell et al., 2018). Furthermore, it can limit women's ability to assert themselves sexually. It can lead to negative consequences for women, such as reduced sexual satisfaction, increased

risk of sexual coercion and assault, and negative body image (Zurbriggen et al., 2011). Existing research suggests that objectification can have serious negative consequences for women's cognitive functioning and impede their ability to succeed in various tasks and activities. The effects of self-objectification can lead to cognitive load, which impairs cognitive performance on a task requiring working memory (Davis, 2018).

Conclusion

Objectification in media is a widespread issue that reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates gender inequality. It has a negative impact on women's physical and mental health and well-being, such as cognitive impairment and negative body image. It is crucial to act and challenge these stereotypes by promoting a comprehensive view of women rather than objectifying them as sexual objects or decorative accessories. In line with Nussbaum's suggestions, this study also concludes that the objectification leads to self-objectification. Interventions that challenge societal norms and promote a holistic understanding of women are necessary to address this issue.

Limitations

This study is based on a mini review of the literature witnessing the women objectification in media, its prevalence, and impacts. However, there are some limitations that narrow down its scope. First, the researchers have not focused on any media type of content. Second, this research is not based on human participants where we could witness their experiences as the part of the problem. Finally, third limitation involves the selected literature without any categorization collectively witnessing the impacts (sexual aggression, gender inequality, body dissatisfaction etc.), that also limit the scope of current research.

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