

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: The Role of Mass Media
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Given the weighty role of media in any society, marginalized groups these days feel empowered. Marginalized groups are the most vulnerable ones, as they do not have or have denied/limited access to decision-making mechanism and policymaking. They are excluded from the right to participate in democratic structures and thereby their legitimate rights are suppressed. Prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and violence along the lines of ethnicity, gender, social class, disability, and sexual orientation are major causes of social exclusion. Policy initiatives should challenge these barriers within mainstream society in order to foster social inclusion. Media play an instrumental role in addressing the grievances of the socially excluded groups and suggest their remedies.

This paper focuses on two central areas: (a) representation of marginalized groups in mass media, including the reasons for, and the consequences of that representation; and (b) how marginalized groups utilize media spaces to create social and political capital. Disseminating information is the primary function of the media. By so doing, media shape and influence public opinion, sustain public interest and debate on governance activities particularly those relating to human rights, minority rights, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy and decision-making processes. As a result of these activities, the media is considered to be a vital part of the civil society arena as both overlap functional areas of democracy and governance. Today, the convergence of communications media and sophisticated technology has revolutionized the world we live in. Society's lexicon is now fraught with such fashionable terms as Internet, cyberspace, digitalization, and information superhighway. The implications of this astonishing cultural reformation are both magnificent and terrifying, posing challenges to policymakers, sociologists, and philosophers alike. The paper will also look at these critical issues.

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